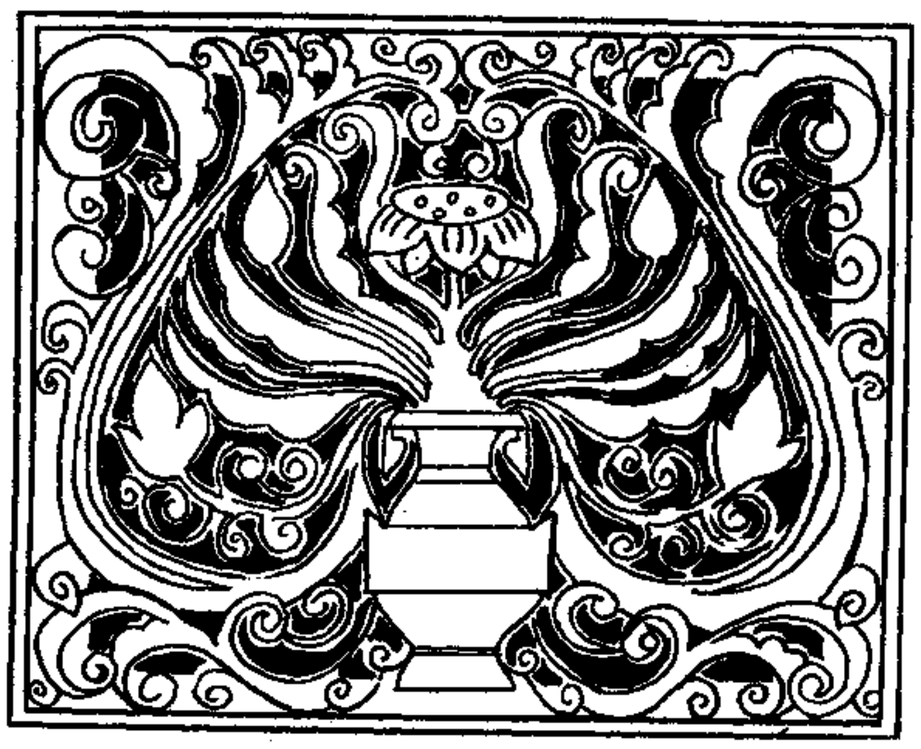

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 101 MAY 1996 No. 5

Divine Wisdom

HOW TO CULTIVATE DEVOTION AND DETACHMENT

(Sage Kapila to Devahūti)

त एते साधवः साध्वि सर्वसङ्गविवर्जिताः ।
सङ्गस्तेष्वथ ते प्रार्थ्यः सङ्गदोषहरा हि ते ॥

Such persons who are without attachment to anything except Me are real *sādhus* (pious people). It is desirable to seek their company, O noble lady, because they are the veritable destroyers of all worldly attachments.

सतां प्रसङ्गान्मम वीर्यसंविदो भवन्ति
हृत्कर्णरसायनाः कथाः ।
तज्जोषणादाश्वपवर्गवर्त्मनि श्रद्धा
रतिर्भक्तिरनुक्रमिष्यति ॥

In the intimate company of such holy ones, you will hear accounts of My glorious deeds, which form a veritable draught of ambrosia to the ear and the heart. By drinking this ambrosia you will soon develop, one after the other, faith *(śraddhā)* in the path of devotion, delight in God *(rati)* and deep love for Him *(bhakti)*.

भक्त्या पुमाञ्जातविराग ऐन्द्रियाद्
दृष्टश्रुतान्मद्रचनानुचिन्तया ।
चित्तस्य यत्तो ग्रहणे योगयुक्तो
यतिष्यते ऋजुभिर्योगमार्गैः ॥

By the power of devotion, consisting in the constant remembrance of My excellences manifested through My creative and redemptive activities, a human being gains detachment from all worldly objects, becomes enthusiastic in spiritual practice and strives to adhere to the *bhakti* disciplines, which are natural and therefore easy to practise.

असेवयायं प्रकृतेर्गुणानां
ज्ञानेन वैराग्यविजृम्भितेन ।
योगेन मय्यर्पितया च भक्त्या
मां प्रत्यगात्मानमिहावरुन्धे ॥

By avoidance of sense enjoyments, by knowledge augmented by renunciation, and by the communion with Me through loving devotion, a person can attain to Me, the indwelling spirit in all, even in this life on earth.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 3.25.24–27

Editorial

On Charity

Any thing small or large given in sincere and humble charity begets pure joy. Those who have given, even once, will bear this out.

Now, charity as a social virtue is well known. But we are not discussing that here. Neither is this a debate on alms, beggars, aid, relief, welfare, etc. We are concerned with charity as a spiritual discipline and with two questions only: Why is charity, *dāna*, important for spiritual life, and how important is it? The 'why' will become clearer as we go on with the discussion, and the answer to the other question is, charity occupies a pivotal place. In fact, it is doubtful if one can enter and progress in spiritual life without practising *dāna*.

There are several things we are expected to renounce before entering the portals of God's mansion. For example, surplus possessions, objects of pleasure, falsehood, vanity, etc. But, says Sri Krishna in the *Gītā* (18.5), dana, charity, must not be given up; one must never cease to be charitable. Significantly, the other two things also He has insisted not to discard, namely, *yajña* (Vedic ritual sacrifices as were prevalent in His time, now in vogue as ritual worship and offerings in temples) and *tapas* (physical and mental penances) are deeply related to dana. Examined closely, dana, giving up, is at the core of *yajña* and *tapas*. Yajna (or temple ritual) involves *giving away material things*, and tapas involves the highest form of dana, viz. *tyāga—giving away oneself* to God, or renunciation of one's usual attachment to one's body with a view to realizing oneself as the Atman.

To appreciate fully the relevance of dana, however, we must hold it beside another idea, viz. *kṛpaṇa*, lit. a miserly, niggardly, dull (perspectiveless), or pitiable person. Referring to the *Gītā*, the *kṛpaṇa* idea occurs twice in it—chapter 2, verses 7 and 49. At the first place, we find Arjuna describing himself as कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः, *kārpaṇya-doṣa-upahata-svabhāvaḥ*: one whose nature has become overpowered by the mentality of a krpana. Here Arjuna, apprehensive of his defeat and the loss of kingdom, wealth, etc., or of losing for ever through death his friends, relatives and others is feeling miserable. Therefore he compares himself to an ordinary miser, who too feels sorry and gets upset at the mere prospect of losing any part of his wealth.

At the second place, the krpana idea does not include so much the external gross things a miser is attached to but the pitiable state of a mind that is constantly in want, discontented, feeling incomplete. Sri Krishna says, कृपणाः फलहेतवः, *kṛpaṇāḥ-phalahetavaḥ*: those who thirst for rewards, who have only one motive behind all their thoughts and pursuits, viz. self-centred material gain and pleasure, are krpanas, pitiable.

Why do such people deserve nothing better than pity? What is wrong in seeking temporal returns? How can society move without result-oriented mundane activities? Or, say, what is pitiable about the prevailing

universal race to be go-getters, achievers, successful, and so on?

Well, that they are to be pitied is said in the context of higher human possibilities and goals. There is nothing wrong with those people as such. All those seeking temporal ends are not unhappy or guilty—they may not at all be feeling so, and may possibly resent being considered pitiable! For example, someone trying to get established in life; or one striving to earn bread for his or her family through perfectly legitimate means; or a businessman/woman earning a profit; or an energetic entrepreneur aiming to strike it rich.

Nevertheless, they are pitiable who hear no call other than those of friends and relatives, success, savings, social attention, accumulation, name, media fame, comforts, etc. They are pitiable because they are like slaves—completely under the demands of another, that is, of their worldly drives, of their passions and possessions. Such people may imagine they are strongwilled, rational, free and responsible choosers of their course. But they in fact are not.

This 'blissful' and gladly accepted slavery of a krpana has been pointed out by Shankaracharya while commenting on that famous passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (3.8.10): यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वास्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स कृपणः। अथ य एतदक्षरं गार्गि विदित्वास्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स ब्राह्मणः॥ *Yo vā etadakṣaraṁ gārgyaviditvā-'smāllokāt-praiti sa kṛpaṇaḥ; atha ya etadakṣaraṁ gārgi viditvā-'smāllokāt-praiti sa brāhmaṇaḥ*: He, O Gārgī, who departs from this world without knowing this Immutable (Atman, Brahman) is a krpana, pitiable. But he, O Gārgī, who departs from this world after knowing this Immutable is a *brāhmaṇa*, knower of Brahman.' He says: ...such a person is a krpana, a slave or such others bought for a price.

Madhusudana Sarasvati too, explaining the above-referred second *Gītā* phrase says:

> Às, indeed, miserly people earning wealth with great pains are, because of their thirst only for some insignificant visible pleasure, unable to experience **the great happiness that comes from dana** etc., and thus cheat themselves, similarly those who perform action with great pains out of desire for mere petty results become deprived of the experience of supreme Bliss (from realizing Atman, God). Thus, alas! what a misfortune and foolishness is their lot. This is what is suggested by the word krpana.

So we get three implications of the word krpana: an intensely acquisitive and possessive person, who gets agitated even at the very thought of the possibility of losing any of his or her belongings (things or persons); whose very existence, identity, as it were, seems to depend on them; second, one who is dominated by worldly expectations; lastly, one devoid of spiritual aspiration or any understanding of the spiritual aspect of one's personality.

Now turning to the subject proper we see that dana is a powerful catalyst for transforming a krpana into a *brāhmaṇa*. We may also be able to sense the true scope of dana: from a low-intensity giving away of small things in charity—to the spiritually mature Arjuna-like inner stability to face death or withstand loss of possessions, friends and relatives—to the highest form of dana as tyaga (renunciation), that is, as detachment towards one's own body, towards one's self-identity that is psychosomatic, to affirm that which is spiritual. This is why dana is so essential for spiritual growth. Therefore, together with japa, meditation, etc., all must practise regular dana, no matter how little in the beginning. A verse proclaims:

दाता लघुरपि सेव्यो भवति
न कृपणः महानपिसमृद्ध्या ।
कूपोऽन्तःस्वादुजलः प्रीत्यै
लोकस्य न समुद्रः ॥

Dātā laghurapi sevyo bhavati
na kṛpaṇaḥ mahānapi samṛddhyā;
Kūpo'ntaḥsvādujalaḥ prītyai
lokasya na samudraḥ.

A donor, even though poor and a giver of only small things, is worthy of worship; not so a krpana, even if he be greatly wealthy. A well with sweet drinking water serves to please people; not so the (vast salty) ocean.

We are all krpanas more or less, in one sense or another. So, how should we practise dana to become brahmanas? The answer is—by gradually turning our self-love and material concerns into universal love and spiritual aspiration through dana.

The scriptures reveal some details about this. To illustrate: The Vedas recognize the fact that human beings are constitutionally self-seekers and driven by desires and mundane goals. Without condemning this the Vedas say: 'You want money, health, longevity, beauty, power, safety, a good spouse,...? Very well. Here is a yajna for fulfilling such and such a desire by adoring such and such a deity. Perform the yajna, and rest assured you will get what you want.' Naturally, a human being, like cattle drawn by fresh grass, jumps at such offers and sets out to perform the rituals. But the noteworthy fact is that, every ritual includes dana and tapas. Before and during the rituals, sometimes spread over several days, the performer has to observe austere rules meant to subdue his coddled body—waking up and bathing early, having only one meal a day, avoiding stimulants and luxurious clothes, sleeping on a mat spread on the floor, and so on. Besides, he has to give away several of his dear things in dana—gold, silver, cattle, etc. as prescribed.

Thus the Vedic dana was a sugar coated medicine, as it were, against the krpana mentality; a double-edged sword, so to say, which on the one hand promised to secure worldly gains and, under that pretext, on the other hand, finely sliced away human attachments to arouse dispassion and renunciation. Dana, forming an inseparable part of those attractive rituals, had an inherent power to strengthen faith in God as the fulfiller of our wants, and to create a willingness to give away—first material things, and finally one's individuality.

So the Vedas reveal that, one, true dana should have a religious basis and, two, it must involve some degree of genuine self-denial and self-control. A few coins casually thrown at a beggar from a bus or a car or a train do not constitute dana. Nor does a pittance given away out of one's huge profits/resources deserve to be called dana or be expected to increase love for God.

This answers why the prevailing customary charity, alms-giving, etc. do not bring about any spiritual benefit to the millions of donors: charity nowadays is, by and large, secular and, more importantly, devoid of humility. Exceptions apart, secular-minded dana in daily life turns, as experience shows, into a simple expedient to get rid of an irksome beggar at one's door; or, in the case of huge charities and welfare programmes, a part of a bargain or a political agenda.

That is why dana as a spiritual discipline has been defined as अर्थानां पात्रे श्रद्धया प्रतिपादनम्, *arthānāṁ pātre śraddhayā pratipādanam*: the *śraddhā*-inspired giving of

(Continued on page 360)

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

SOME ASPECTS OF WORK

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that if all classes of creatures are under the influence of their natures, then there being no scope for self-effort in mundane and Vedic matters, injunctions and prohibitions will become meaningless? Nor is there anyone devoid of his nature with regard to whom these can be meaningful.

Hence He says:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

Indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau;
Tayorna vaśamāgacchet-
tau hyasya paripanthinau. (3.34)

With regard to the objects of all the organs attraction and repulsion are present following a settled rule. One should not come under the sway of those two, because they are one's enemies.

By the repetition of *indriyasya indriyasya*, of the organs, it is implied that *arthe*, with regard to the objects, of all the organs—with regard to sound, touch, form, taste and smell (in the case of sense organs), and similarly also with regard to the objects of all the organs of action, with regard to speaking etc.; *vyavasthitau*, are present following a settled rule, are present in accordance with the conditions of favourableness and unfavourableness; *rāga-dveṣau*, attraction and repulsion—attraction with regard to an object that, even though forbidden by the scriptures, is favourable, and repulsion with regard to an object that, even though enjoined by the scriptures, is unfavourable; thus (it is ordained) with regard to every organ. However, those two (attraction and repulsion) occur everywhere, but not irregularly.

As regards this the scope of self-effort and the scriptures is this that, '*vaśam na āgacchet*, one should not come under the sway; *tayoḥ*, of those two'. How? That which is man's nature impels him to such scripturally forbidden acts as eating the meat of game killed by a poisoned arrow etc., following attraction alone, which occurs from the idea of something being a source of what one desires, that (idea) being associated with the absence of a powerful idea that it entails what is undesirable. Similarly, it (man's nature) turns him away from even such scripturally enjoined practices as *sandhyā-vandana*[1], following repulsion alone, which occurs from the idea of something being a source of what is undesirable, that (idea) being associated with the absence of a powerful idea that it entails what is desirable.

When a person is made to understand by the scriptures that what is prohibited

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1. Morning and evening hymns, and act of worship.—Monier Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

leads to a great evil then the mere tangible idea that something is productive of the desirable cannot produce attraction with regard to that thing, because the supporting idea[2] is absent, just as (one is not attracted) to food mixed with honey and poison. Similarly, when one is made to understand by the scripture that what is enjoined leads to what is desirable, then, on account of the supporting idea, the mere knowledge that something is productive of undesirable results cannot give rise to repulsion with regard to that thing. And thus the scriptures, when not obstructed (by other factors), lead a person to what is enjoined, and prevent him from what is prohibited.

So, when as a consequence of the preponderance of discriminating knowledge arising from the scriptures the natural attraction and repulsion (of one) get destroyed following the eradication of their causes, the nature of the person who is endued with scriptural wisdom cannot lead him to a wrong path. Hence there arises no contingency of the scriptures and a man's self-effort becoming useless.

Na āgacchet, one should not come; *vaśam,* under the sway; *tayoḥ,* of those two, of attraction and repulsion. One should not act or withdraw under their influence, but one should eschew them by destroying their causes through the scriptural knowledge that is opposed to them. *Hi,* because; *tau,* those two, attraction and repulsion, which are caused by natural defects; are *asya,* one's, of this one, of a person who is a seeker of Liberation; *paripanthinau,* enemies, creators of obstacles on the path to Liberation, like a robber to a traveller. And this fact has been explained very elaborately (by the Commentator) under the Śruti,

> There were two classes of Prajāpati's sons, the gods and the demons. Naturally, the gods were fewer, and the demons more in number. They vied with each other, etc.[3]

by ascertaining as demoniacal the conduct that is opposed to the scriptures and arises from natural attraction and repulsion, and the conduct that is in accord with the scriptures as divine. So we desist.

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that if the scriptural duties alone are to be undertaken by eschewing the behaviour that is common with animals etc., which is dictated by natural attraction and repulsion, then one should undertake only such activities as begging etc. that are easy? What is the necessity of battle, which is a source of extreme sorrow?

Hence He says:

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ
paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt;
Svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ
paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ. (3.35)

One's own duty, though defective, is superior to another's duty well-performed. Death is better while engaged in one's own duty; another's duty is fraught with fear.

That duty is one's own which is prescribed (by the scriptures) for the respective caste and stages of life. *Svadharmaḥ,* one's own duty; though *viguṇaḥ,* defective, done without the perfection of all its components (i.e. incompletely); is *śreyān,* superior, more praiseworthy; *para-dharmāt,* than

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2. The strong idea that some thing is *not* productive of undesirable results.

3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad,* 1.3.1.

another's duty— which has not been prescribed for oneself —; though *svanuṣṭhitāt,* well-performed, done with perfection in all its components (i.e. completely).

Indeed, nothing enjoined by an authority different from the Vedas can be a duty, on which (contrary supposition alone) the inference that 'even another's duty should be undertaken like one's own duty, because it (too) is a duty' can be an authority on this matter. For there is the dictum, 'Duty is that which is to be undertaken for a human goal on the authority of an injunction presenting it'.[4]

Therefore, *svadharme,* while engaged in one's own duty, though it be defective in some part; even *nidhanam,* death; is *śreyaḥ,* better, more commendable, than the life of one who is engaged in somebody else's duty. Verily, one's death while remaining engaged in one's own duty is productive of fame in this world, and it is the cause of attaining heaven etc. hereafter. However, since *paradharmaḥ,* another's duty; is *bhayāvahaḥ,* fraught with fear, on account of being a source of infamy in this world and instrumental in leading to hell hereafter, therefore another's duty also should verily be shunned like one's own natural conduct that is prompted by attraction, repulsion, etc. This is the meaning.

Thus in this way it stands stated that, those who accept the teaching of the Lord attain the highest good, and those who do not accept that fall away from the path to the highest good. (In the verses) beginning with, 'But those who, decrying this,' etc. (3.32), have been stated many reasons why those who have fallen from the path to the highest good engage in *kāmya-karmas* with desire for results and perform only sinful acts. As to that, this is the verse summarizing them:

> Loss of faith, as also cavil, evil-mindedness and foolishness, being under the influence of one's own nature, and excessive attraction and repulsion, and liking for another's duty—these are said to be those that lead to the evil path.

(to be continued)

4. *Jaimini's Mīmāṁsā-Sūtras,* 1.1.2.

Sound Sense of Values

Once Marshall Field indicated the following 12 reminders that can be helpful in obtaining a sound sense of values: They are

The value of time
The success of perseverence
The pleasure of working
The dignity of simplicity
The worth of character
The power of kindness
The influence of example
The obligation of duty
The wisdom of economy
The virtue of patience
The improvement of talent and
The joy of originating.

Sri Ramakrishna Touched Them: Girish Chandra Sen

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

The following is one more article (see April '96 PB) by the author in a series on some of the less known but eminent householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Girish Sen was an active member of the Brahmo Samaj. But, impressed among other things by Sri Ramakrishna's solution to the problem of religious diversity, he was, the author specially notes, the first to publish a biography (in Bengali, in 1887) of Sri Ramakrishna along with a collection of some of the saint's teachings.

Swami Prabhananda, one of the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math, resides at Belur Math.

Charmed by the depth, overflow of divine love and simplicity of the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar, as Sri Ramakrishna was popularly known in those days, Keshab Chandra Sen, the cynosure of all eyes associated with the Brahmo movement, introduced the former to the educated classes of Calcutta, the then capital of British India. Like a stone thrown on the surface of a calm lake giving rise to waves after waves, or spreading ripples after ripples, the Paramahamsa almost created a sensation among the educated youth and even among those not interested in religion. To be precise, he continued to make waves in the different strata of society.

Keshab Chandra was not the lone person to be overwhelmed by the magnetic personality of the Saint of Dakshineswar: his followers and friends also who were practising austerities in the *Sadhan Kanan*[1] at Belgharia near Calcutta, got carried away after their first encounter with the Paramahamsa. Bhai Girish Chandra Sen was one of them.

Popularly known as Moulavi Girish, Bhai Girish of Nabavidhan Brahmo Samaj was a staunch follower of Keshab. With a view to invigorating the syncrectic religion of Nabavidhan, or New Dispensation, Keshab had first selected in 1876 and then appointed in 1879 four of his loyal and scholarly associates to specialize in Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Bhai Girish's share was to study the original scriptures of Islam. He did it creditably.

In 1881 he produced the first Bengali version of the Koran Sharif, a product of his hard labour of six years. He read the original text with the commentaries of Tafsir and translated it without any guidance. Thus he succeeded in making this valuable scripture available to the Bengali readers; also, he could 'free the chief scriptural sources of Islam from the imprisonment of Arabic... and the monopoly of a few Moulavis'.[2] His faithful translation of the Koran has been acclaimed by a host of Bengali Muslim scholars as one of the most valuable works.[3]

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1. Some called it Tapovan; it was the garden house of Joygopal Sen; its present address is 8, Barrackpore Trunk Road, Belgharia.
2. David Kopf: *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, 1988, p. 282; hereafter *The Brahmo Samaj*.
3. Satikumar Chatterjee, an authority on Brahmo movement, quotes (in his book *Bhai Girish Chandra Sen*) Md. Ahmadulla, a former

A great grandson of Darpanarayan Roy, Dewan of Nawab Alibardi Khan, Girish Chandra Sen was born the youngest of six children in Panchdrona village of Maheshwardi sub-division of Dhaka district (now in Bangladesh) in April 1835. Born into a humble lower middle-class family, he faced difficulty when at the age of only ten he lost his father Madhavram. But his mother lived for ninety-four years. Brought up in a family which for several generations were Persian-knowing officials in the Muslim administration, Girish easily mastered Persian even while a boy. He also learnt Sanskrit and Bengali. To help him learn English he was sent to Pagose school in Dhaka city. But it held no interest for him, 'even when beaten on occasion by the headmaster'.[4]

He found his first job at Mymensingh in 1853, as a Persian letter copyist for Rs. 16 a month. It could hardly satisfy him. He tried hard to learn English once again, but he did not succeed. So frustrated he became that when he was nineteen years old he attempted suicide three times. He finally attended one of the newly created normal schools established by the government to train teachers in the Bengali medium. He did well in the examination, won a scholarship, and got a job as a second *pundit* at the district school at Mymensingh. During this period

Girish Chandra Sen

his remarkable talent for literary work blossomed. His *Vanita-Vinod*, a book of verse in Bengali, a Bengali translation of Sadi's *Gulisthan*, which later became a textbook, and his articles and news reports in *Dhaka-prakash*[5] easily brought him to the limelight.

He was perhaps not as dry as he appeared to be. But that he was over-conscientious will be evident from the following excerpt quoted from the introduction to his autobiography. He wrote, 'After a person's death, it is customary for friends to exaggerate his good qualities. To prevent such false eulogies, I am writing this book. This should not be circulated in my lifetime.'[6]

This also showed the stuff he was primarily made of. Not surprisingly, Girish as a young boy observed, 'Very wretched

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teacher of Calcutta Madrasa, who said, 'As we are Mohammedans by faith and birth, our best and hearty thanks are due to the author for his disinterested and patriotic effort and the great trouble he has taken to diffuse the deep meaning of our Holy and Sacred religious book, the Koran, to the public. The version of the Koran above quoted has been such a wonderful success that we wish the author would publish his name to the public, to whom he has done such a valuable service, and thus gain a personal regard from the public.' (p. 12)

4. *The Brahmo Samaj*, p. 131.

5. Satikumar Chattopadhya: *Bhai Girish Chandra Sen*, p. 5; hereafter *Bhai Girish*.
6. Quoted in the Miscellany (*The Statesman*), 20 July 1986; article by Amrit Bhavaguray on *'The Brahmo Maulavis.'*

was the social condition of Panchdrona village in those days. Hardly were there any moral principles guiding the relationship between men and women; a man of good character was a rarity; I could hardly hear noble thoughts or good counsels from any person. Most of my distant relations were flagrant drunkards, but no one belonging to our family indulged in this. No narcotic substance, not even cigar-smoking, could get a hold over me, but I was morally so depraved that I did not hesitate to tell lies and steal goodies from our kitchen....Polluted by evil ideas and bad thoughts, my mind became corrupt. However, the merciful God saved me from many sins and weaknesses....'[7]

In 1857, when he was 22, he married Brahmamayee Devi, a nine-year old girl, and began to give her lessons in general education. The sudden death of his immediate elder brother, who lived with him, proved a terrible shock for him.

Like many contemporary educated young men, Girish was caught in a maelstorm of competing value system and fashionable trends. But suddenly a window opened up when he got in touch with some of the writings of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and a fresh breeze brought him relief. Born in a typical Vaishnava family and Vaidya by caste, Girish had his first exposure to Brahmoism while a student from a lecture by Bijoy Krishna Goswami. No doubt, however, the visit of Keshab, already a famed orator, in 1865 to Mymensingh, and Bijoy Krishna Goswami's visit there two years later, exerted a profound influence on his mind. Girish joined the Keshabite group of Brahmos even though he found himself promptly outcasted from the Hindu society. Thereafter his house became a refuge for similar young men thrown out by the orthodox Hindus.

In 1870 Girish lost his wife and also his newborn daughter. Next year, when Aghorenath, the Brahmo preacher, visited Mymensingh, Girish got himself formally initiated as a Brahmo. One year later he left the job as the school *pundit* and came to Calcutta to join Bharat Ashram, the newly formed Brahmo community, at 13 Mirzapur Street, Calcutta. He was appointed a teacher in the girl's school there. Ordained as a preacher by Keshab in 1874, he came to be known as Bhai Girish Chandra Sen.

His sympathy for women had prompted him to start in his village a girls' school; it lasted over forty years. He gave much of his time and energy for the emancipation of women.

> *On the other hand, Girish Chandra, being a keen observer, did not fail to notice that the Paramahamsa had such a sweet nature—his words were so sweet that even a person in extreme misery would forget everything within a few minutes after coming to him.*

Girish was fascinated by Keshab's daring experimentation to make a synthesis of the different major religions, when something revolutionary happened and changed the course of the Brahmo movement of the Keshabite group. Innocuously enough, on 15 March 1875, at about 8 or 9 a.m., there arrived the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar, with his nephew Hriday at the garden-house of Babu Joygopal Sen at Belgharia. At that time Keshab Chandra and his ministers including Girish Chandra were living in solitude and practising spiritual discipline. Keshab then used to cook his food under a tree and take it in the open; the other ministers used to cook their food in the community kitchen.

An ordinary looking man of medium height, weak and emaciated, and wearing a single piece of red bordered cloth with one

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7. Free translation of an excerpt from his *Atmajivan* (Autobiography) quoted by Satikumar Chattopadhya in his booklet *Bhai Girish*, p. 5.

of its ends thrown over his shoulders, the Paramahamsa was not impressive at all. He saluted Keshab and his associates, who were sitting on the ghat of the tank and preparing to have bath. They looked at the new arrival as at a curiosity. Unmindful of their reactions, the Paramahamsa, after preliminary remarks and a song which threw him into an ecstasy, began pouring out a flow of profound spiritual truths and experiences that made the Brahmo leaders wonderstruck. They did not take time to realize that he was an extraordinary person, in fact a divine person. Proficient in understanding the real nature of a person and also in ascertaining his spiritual status, in no time Sri Ramakrishna assessed Keshab Chandra Sen and his colleagues. It seems he liked the group, particularly its leader, Keshab, whom he had had an occasion to see once from a distance.

On the other hand, Girish Chandra, being a keen observer, did not fail to notice that the Paramahamsa had such a sweet nature—his words were so sweet that even a person in extreme misery would forget everything within a few minutes after coming to him. 'One would get great solace by seeing his smiling face, his childlike simplicity, his devotion for the Mother's name, and his absorption in *samadhi*.'[8] Besides, Girish's discerning mind could easily grasp the historical significance of this momentous meeting. He described it in the following words:

> There was a great necessity for the Brahmos at the time to have a contact with him (Sri Ramakrishna). We have to accept it as the work of Providence. Though we cannot accept Paramahamsa's faith in toto—we know that certain principles of his are not approved by the Brahmo religion—, yet we cannot have the least doubt that the exalted life of this great soul in whom Yoga and Bhakti were predominant, was utilized by Providence for the betterment of the New Dispensation.
>
> Keshab, greatly religious, learned, and of world-wide fame, used to sit by the side of this illiterate Paramahamsa like a disciple, like a younger brother, in all humility and hear his teachings with reverence (*shraddha*) and appreciation. He never used to argue with him. He would assimilate well and adopt in his own life all the valuable things in the Paramahamsa. Keshab Chandra has shown to us how we are to respect Sadhus and imbibe their saintliness.[9]

Sri Ramakrishna, a true hermeneutician in his practice of religious disciplines, upheld the value and sanctity of each tradition that he had tried. This deeply impressed Keshab Chandra and his followers. For they were in earnest search of a common ground on which to achieve harmony and peace among the religions that were vying with each other. Among the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that found a place in the collections of Bhai Girish, the dominant theme was harmony of religions. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell the Brahmos:

> Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Saktas, Saivas, Vaishnavas, the Brahmajnanis of the time of the rishis, and you, the Brahmajnanis of modern times, all seek the same object....Do you know what the truth is? God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths; but a path is by no means God Himself.

8. *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1936, p. 86.

9. English adaptation from *Paramahamsa Ukti Ebam Samkshipta Jivani* (Bengali) by Girish Chandra Sen, the second edition of which was published on 24 January 1887. (*Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1936, pp. 90–1).

> Indeed, one can reach God if one follows any of the paths with whole-hearted devotion.[10]

Whereas Sri Ramakrishna appreciated the need of and contribution made by every historical religion, he never ventured to mutilate any of them. But Keshab's approach was entirely different. He wanted to have a conglomeration of the essences of all the historical religions. In his quest for a common ground, he assigned to each of his scholarly associates a major religion to be studied from its scriptures as the primary sources. Girish Chandra was allotted Islam. In 1876, at the age of forty-two, he went to Lucknow to learn classical Arabic, so that he could read the source books in the original language.

On his return to Mymensingh by the end of 1881, he started publishing in monthly installments the Bengali translation of the Koran Sharif. In the next few decades he produced as many as 22 titles[11]—some his original writings, others translations into Bengali—on the scriptures and the life of the saints of Islam.

As an accredited preacher of Brahmoism he had to travel extensively throughout India, meet people, give talks, conduct community worships, and help local people organize groups of like-minded people. An ambitious, clear-minded and aggressive idealist, Bhai Girish never obfuscated issues or walked along the easy path of compromise. He proved to be a powerful preacher. He narrated his experience in the pages of *Dharmatattva*, the Bengali weekly of the New Dispensation, and the Bengali monthly, *Mahila*, dedicated to the cause of women. Besides editing these two journals for sometime, he helped in various ways the Brahmo journals *Bamabodhini, Sulabh Samachar* and *Paricharika*. Frankly, his great literary contribution has not been properly evaluated so far, much less his enrichment of Bengali literature through Islamic literature from its sources.

One of the most loyal, devout and hardworking associates of Keshab, Bhai Girish was rather an extraordinary man. He had certain qualities which few else among Keshab's associates had. Two of his characteristics were his sense of duty and objectivity. His insistence on factual reporting of events earned him the epithet 'Girish, the Truthful'. Though entrusted with the responsibility of covering Islamic literature, he became so fascinated with Sri Ramakrishna that he ventured to publish the first biography of Sri Ramakrishna as early as 28th January 1887 along with seventy-five of the saint's teachings he had collected. It may be presumed that he also keenly studied the practice of Islam by the Paramahamsa, an orthodox Brahmin.

Two of his characteristics were his sense of duty and objectivity. His insistence on factual reporting of events earned him the epithet 'Girish, the Truthful'.

The ceaseless breaking forth of Sri Ramakrishna's profound spiritual truths and experiences, the like of which Girish had never heard before, had stirred his heart; they indelibly remained impressed on his memory. He recorded them faithfully and then presented them in simple language through the *Dharmatattva* and other Brahmo journals.

Among the Brahmo preachers Bhai Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, the songster apostle Trailokyanath Sanyal, Upadhyay Gour Govinda Roy and a few others have no doubt left their accounts of the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar. But none of them

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10. 'M.': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, New York Edition, p. 559.
11. *Bhai Girish,* pp. 20–3.

has revealed as vividly as Bhai Girish has Sri Ramakrishna, the person, the jewels of his teachings, or their impact on the Brahmo movement. Girish's account was always objective and quite reliable. Thus Bhai Girish achieved a real first for Bengali literature on three counts: his (a) translation of the Koran, (b) biography of Sri Ramakrishna, and (c) earliest collection of the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

The question whether Keshab was the primary influence on Ramakrishna or it was the other way has been debated for long. But none would question the conclusion arrived at by David Kopf when he said, 'Though Brahmos have argued that Keshab used the term "motherhood of God" thirty-two times before meeting Ramakrishna, the fact is that the idea of using Saktaism for Brahmo ends did not become a part of Brahmo reformist ideology until after 1875',[12] or when he said,

His experiments with religious behaviour dealt ultimately with the same problem of unity and diversity that had plagued Brahmos. When Ramakrishna 'tested' most of the major religions of the world to discover the validity of each one's professed uniqueness, Keshab was evidently impressed by the results. Ramakrishna did not approach the problem in the Brahmo ways of intellectually dissecting each religion, but in the existential ways of experiencing each religion intuitively.[13]

Every form of worship in each of the religions he practised was a living experience with Sri Ramakrishna. So, no wonder Bhai Girish as well as other sincere seekers of God were touched by the palpable experiences of the saint.

It is not certain if Girish met Sri Ramakrishna separately. Perhaps he did, for he quotes in his booklet some incidents as well as teachings of Sri Ramakrishna not recorded by others. By way of illustration we may quote one incident here. While walking down a path one day the Paramahamsa noticed a man felling a tree by an axe. He cried out saying, 'Ah, the axe is hitting the person of the Divine Mother who is very much present in this tree.'[14]

Nevertheless, it is certain that Girish was in intimate contact with Sri Ramakrishna for about eleven years. Sri Ramakrishna's saintly image, vividly manifest in his talks, music, dance and ecstasy, stole into Girish's heart and made a permanent niche there. His adherence to truth, his humility, his kind and sympathetic treatment of all who came to him, his addressing women as 'mother', and his liberal attitude towards practitioners of other creeds hint at the probable influence of the Paramahamsa on him. The direct influence of the Paramahamsa as well as his indirect influence percolating through Keshab Chandra brought changes in his life for the better; they sweetened his life; they gave him inner peace and joy. Bhai Girish's literary works on the Paramahamsa sparkle with his genuine insight. He admitted, 'We came to know of the great saints like Sri Chaitanya through books, but we feel blessed only after coming in direct contact with the Paramahamsa.'[15]

As a truthful observer of the developments of the New Dispensation, Bhai Girish Chandra wrote, 'From the beginning of his (Sri Ramakrishna's) spiritual life was seen in him the manifestation of the harmony of religions and the forecast of the New Dispensation.' Also he frankly recorded,

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12. *The Brahmo Samaj*, p. 265.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
14. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das: *Samasamayik Dristite Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa* (Bengali), p. 58; hereafter *Samasamayik*.
15. Shyamlal Basu (Ed.): *Adi Kathamrita* (Bengali), 1983, p. 108.

It was due to the influence of the Paramahamsa's life that the Motherhood of God was kindled to a great extent in the Brahmo Samaj[16]. Acharya Deva learnt from him to a greater extent to address God with the sweet appellation of Mother like a simple child, to pray to Her and crave (Her) indulgence like a child.'[17]

Besides Paramahamsa's impact on the New Dispensation or for that matter on the Brahmo movement, his influence on the life of the practitioners of the New Dispensation was perhaps most significant. Chiranjib Sharma, in his biography on Keshab, observed,

> That the Motherhood of God, worship and prayer in simple colloquial words, which Keshab was practising of late, were the outcome of his contact with the Paramahamsa was known to many. But who other than Keshab could make good use of the Paramahamsa's sanctifying influence? Everybody who availed of the saint's companionship showed the Yoga of Divine Love, no doubt, but none could gain as much as Keshab did.[18]

Among others, however, Girish, sincere to the core as he always was, derived great benefit from his company, and it was reflected distinctly in his life and works.

The Brahmo leaders and Sri Ramakrishna liked each other's company. He eagerly participated in their prayers and celebrations, and even witnessed and enjoyed the drama *Navavrindaban* in which Keshab Chandra, Girish Chandra (who played the role of a Moulavi) and even Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda) participated. Girish, once he became acquainted with Sri Ramakrishna, never missed an opportunity to meet the Paramahamsa and be blessed by his holy company. He attended even his funeral service at Cossipore Ghat on the 16th August 1886, and underwent the austerities prescribed for the mourning period. Along with other members of Nabavidhan he put on a black badge of mourning.

Towards the end of 1908, Girish Chandra suffered from heart trouble at Calcutta. Medical treatment could not give him much relief. So he went back to Dhaka and finally passed away on 15 August 1910. Hindus as well as Mohammedans carried his bier to the burning ghat. Followers of Sri Ramakrishna too joined them. The last rituals were performed following the prescriptions of the New Dispensation. Thus went off a bright flame that was patronized by Keshab Chandra Sen and sanctified by Sri Ramakrishna. Understandably, Girish Chandra is considered one of the best blooms in the spiritual garden of Nabavidhan, which was lovingly nourished by Sri Ramakrishna who dedicated himself to the rejuvenation of the spiritual life of all sincere aspirants. ❐

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16. Bhai Trailokyanath Sanyal wrote, 'The manifestation of devotional aspect and the ideal of Motherhood of God which is seen nowadays in the Brahmo Samaj is mainly due to Paramahamsa Ramakrishna'. (*Keshab Charit*, p. 133.)

    The journal, *Paricharika*, August 1886, commented, 'Motherhood of God was introduced into the Brahmo Samaj specially by the influence of Paramahamsa's life.' (*Samasamayik*, p. 39)
17. *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1936, p. 90.
18. Chiranjib Sharma (alias Trailokyanath Sanyal): *Keshab Charit* (Bengali), p. 133.

> The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness.
>
> —*Swami Vivekananda*

Devi Roopbhavani's Ten Verses on Nirvana

Translated by

MS APARNA DAR

In last month's PB *we had published a short life of Devi Roopbhavani. As we had said then, this month we begin a series on the Devi's teachings and other compositions. We are thankful to the translator for sending us these little known but inspiring utterances (originally in the Kashmiri language) of the Devi.*

सहज सर्वत्र व्यापी स्वोह्रेथ् विचारेयम्
बहुबल स्वभाव ईकान्त स्वयंबू परमाकारी
अन्तर्मोखी द्रेष्टी नेरवान् रहस्य ततो परमगती ॥ १

Sahaja sarvatra vyāpī svohreth vicāreyam
bahubala svabhāva īkānta svayambū
paramākārī
antarmokhī dreṣṭī neravān rahasya
tafī paramagafī. (1)

सहज, *sahaja*—natural, simple; सर्वत्र, *sarvatra*—on all sides, in every direction; व्यापी, *vyāpī*—pervading; स्वोह्रेथ्, *svohreth*—best friend; विचारेयम्, *vicāreyam*—worthy of contemplation; बहुबल, *bahubala*—full of dynamic energy; स्वभाव, *svabhāva*—nature; ईकान्त, *īkānta*—alone; स्वयंबू, *svayambū*—self-created; परमाकारी, *parmākārī*—whose form pervades the entire universe, अन्तर्, *antar*—inwards, towards one's soul, inner region within the heart; मोखी, *mokhī*—facing, looking in a certain direction; द्रेष्टी, *dreṣṭī*—vision; नेरवान, *neravān*—liberation, salvation; रहस्य, *rahasya*—secret; ततो, *tafī*—such a person; परमगती, *paramagafī*—supreme State, Liberation, *Mukti.*

Ishwara, the supreme Master of the universe, is always in His natural state; pervading all directions, every place; He is the best friend, and is worthy of contemplation.

By nature He is full of boundless energy. He is eternally alone, self-created, and His form pervades the entire universe.

When a devotee looks inwards, within his own soul, he realizes the secret of Liberation, and attains to the supreme State.

शुद्धयोक्त मूलाधारी कुण्डली मण्डली गौरी
सेद अरथ सूख्म सोष्पती चखूर विरख्त शान्तादारी
ईश्वरी तोरियातीत परमानन्दी नेतिस्तस्थी
अन्तर्मोखी द्रेष्टी नेरवान् रहस्य ततो परमगती ॥ २

Śuddha-yokta mūlādhārī kuṇḍalī
maṇḍalī gaurī
seda aratha sūkhma soṣpafī cakhūra
virakhta śāntādārī
īśvarī toriyātīta paramānandī netistasthī
antarmokhī dreṣṭī neravān rahasya
tafī paramagafī. (2)

शुद्धयोक्त, *Śuddhayokta*—with pure resolve; मूलाधारी, *mūlādhārī*—Mūlādhāra (the first and lowest centre in the Sushumna); कुण्डली, *kuṇḍalī*— Kundalini Shakti (literally, the spiritual power which lies coiled in the Mūlādhāra); मण्डली, *maṇḍalī*—circular in shape; गौरी, *gaurī*—white in colour; सेद अरथ, *seda aratha*—with pure desire for liberation; सूख्म, *sūkhma*—by subtle practices; सोष्पती, *soṣpafī*—deep meditation; चखूर, *cakhūra*—six yogic *chakras*, or centres, along a human's spinal column, designated as Mūlādhāra, Svādhiṣṭhāna, Maṇipūra, Anāhata, Viśuddha and Ājñā; विरख्त, *virakhta*—becoming detached; शान्तादारी, *sāntādārī*—attaining the calm and peaceful state in the Sahasrara

(the yogic centre in the cerebrum, the thousand-petalled lotus, abode of Śiva); ईश्वरी तोरियातीत, *īśvarī toriyātīta*—the fourth state of being, or Turīya, realm of Ishwara; परमानन्दी, *paramānandī*—blissful; नेतिस्तस्थी, *netistasthī*—the state of merging in the supreme Being.

With pure resolve, the devotee awakens the Kuṇḍalinī Shakti from the Mūlādhāra Chakra. This coiled or potential Shakti is circular in shape and white in colour.

With pure desire for liberation, by subtle practices of deep meditation, and becoming detached from worldly allurements, the devotee comes to rest in his spiritual nature, or the Kuṇḍalinī Shakti attains its peaceful location.

The realm of Ishwara is attained in the state of Turīya. This is the blissful state of union with the supreme Being.

When a devotee looks inwards, within his own soul, he realizes the secret of Liberation, and attains to the supreme State.

तथ् रूपमयी तथ् परमगती सर्वथानी प्रवाही
गति गट् पूरनी छद्वा देह त्रेपितम्
समरथ स्वामी परमारथ विदानम्
अन्तर्-मोखी द्रेष्टी नेरवान् रहस्य ततो परमगती ॥ ३

Tath rūpamayī tath paramagatī sarvathānī pravāhī
gati gaṭ pūranī chadvā deha trepitam
samaratha svāmī paramāratha vidānam
antar-mokhī dreṣṭī neravān rahasya tatī paramagatī. (3)

तथ्, *tath*—this; रूपमयी, *rūpamayī*—all-pervasive reality; परमगती, *paramagatī*—supreme state of self-realization; सर्वथानी, *sarvathānī*—present in all conscious and inert beings; प्रवाही, *pravāhī*—continuous flow; गति, *gati*—the Supreme; गट्, *gaṭ*—all conscious and inert beings; पूरनी, *pūranī*—fulfills; देह, *deha*—body; छद्वा, *chadvā*—hunger and thirst; त्रेपितम्, *trepitam*—satisfies; समरथ, *samaratha*—capable; स्वामी, *svāmī*—Master, supreme Being; परमारथ, *paramāratha*—self-realization; विदानम्, *vidānam*—takes a decision.

Knowing this all-pervasive Reality (Ishwara) gives one the supreme state of Liberation (Mukti). He flows continuously in all conscious beings as well as in inert things.

The Supreme fulfils all beings; He satisfies the hunger and thirst of their body.

The capable Master, Himself, decides when the individual soul receives its final self-realization.

When a devotee looks inwards, within his own soul, he realizes the secret of Liberation, and attains to the supreme State.

उपनेषद् पारिजाता अखेय् फल एक
अरथी सद्ग्वर योगी अदेहो पुरानम्
बहु तीज वाणी सुशीलम् सुदरशन्
निरायु अग्रायु परम दीप बानो प्रसन्नो
अन्तर मोखी द्रेष्टी नेरवान् रहस्य ततो परमगती ॥ ४

Upaneṣad pārijātā akhey phala eka
arathī sadgvara yogī adeho purānam
bahu tīja vāṇī suśīlam sudaraśan
nirāyu agrāyu parama dīpa bāno prasanno
antara mokhī dreṣṭī neravān rahasya
tatī paramagatī. (4)

उपनेषद्, *upaneṣad*—in the Upanishads; पारिजाता, *pārijātā*—the wish-fulfilling Kalpataru (Tree of Brahman); अखेय्, *akhey*—indestructible; एक फल, *eka phala*—the one, best divine Fruit; अरथी, *arathī*—in its true meaning (true sense); अदेहो, *adeho*—without a body; सद्ग्वर, *sadgvara*—sat-guru; पुरानम्, *purānam*—origin (primary cause); योगी, *yogī*—yogi; बहु तीज, *bahu tīja*—infinitely radiant; वाणी, *vāṇī*—innumerable kinds of speech; सुशीलम, *suśīlam*—tender and gentle; सुदरशन्, *sudaraśan*—beautiful; निरायु, *nirāyu*—ageless; अग्रायु, *agrāyu*—He existed even before all creation began; परम दीप बानो, *parama dīpa bāno*—His radiance is greater than a thousand suns; प्रसन्नो, *prāsanno*—(this

radiance is) pleasing and soothing to the eyes.

In the Upanishads, this indestructible Kalpataru (Ishwara) and its divine Fruit is described.

In the true sense, it is He who as the sat-guru becomes the yogi (teaching union with Ishwara). He is the First Cause and is without form.

The supreme Being is exceedingly radiant; He has innumerable kinds of speech; His nature is extremely tender and calm, and He is very beautiful.

He is ageless, for He existed even before the universe was created. His radiance is brighter than a thousand suns; yet this brilliance gives but a pleasing light to the eyes.

When a devotee looks inwards, within his own soul, he realizes the secret of Liberation, and attains to the supreme State.

पवितूर नेथूर पश्यूत मोखी अन्तर
बाहो बहुदनाड़ी असंख्य काम करतू
यिहोय राजयूगी दाता पिता सुय
सर्व कांख्या सु अर्थ पूरनी
अन्तर मोखी द्रेष्टी नेरवान् रहस्य ततो परमगती ॥ ५

Pavitūra nethūra paśyūta mokhī antara
bāho bahudanāḍī asaṅkhya kāma karatū
yihoya rājayugī dātā pitā suya
sarva kāṅkhyā su artha pūranī
antara mokhī dreṣṭī neravān rahasya
tatī paramagatī. (5)

पवितूर, *pavitūra*—pure; नेथूर, *nethūra*—eyes; पश्यूत, *paśyūta*—sees; मोखी अन्तर, *mokhī antara*—looks within (meditates within his soul); बाहो, *bāho*—extremely; बहुदनाड़ी, *bahudanāḍī*—spiritual wealth; असंख्य काम करतू, *asaṅkhya kāma karatū*—capable of doing the most difficult tasks; यिहोय सुय, *yihoya suya*—this aspirant; राजयूगी, *rājayugī*—Raja-yogi; दाता, *dātā*—giver of all things; पिता, *pitā*—father; सर्व, *sarva*—all; सु, *su*—excellent; अर्थ, *artha*—purpose; कांख्या, *kāṅkhyā*—desires; पूरनी, *pūranī*—fulfils.

With pure eyes the devotee meditates within himself, and then he sees his own soul.

Such a person attains great spiritual wealth, and he can do the most difficult tasks.

He is a Raja-yogi; he becomes the giver of all things and the father of all persons.

All desires, those with good purpose, are fulfilled by him.

When a devotee looks inwards, within his own soul, he realizes the secret of Liberation, and attains to the supreme State.

(to be continued)

In order to arrive at having pleasure in everything,
Desire to have pleasure in nothing,
In order to arrive at possessing everything,
Desire to possess nothing,
In order to arrive at being everything,
Desire to be nothing.

—*St. John of the Cross*

Life and Message of Mahavir the Jain Prophet

DR. JANARDAN SINGH

Here we have a short but comprehensive article on the life and philosophy of the great Prophet Mahavir. The idea behind this presentation, says the author, is the hope that it may help thoughtful people re-examine the priorities of life: Humanity is suffering from an identity-crisis. It has wrongly identified itself with the mortal physical frame. Hence its agonies and distress in spite of technological progress. This is where Mahavir's exemplary life showing that, like him, human beings are all basically divine souls can help remove their inner anguish.

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Vardhaman Mahavir, the twenty-fourth and the last Jain *tirthankara* (prophet), is a crest jewel adorning the forehead of humanity. By virtue of his unique philosophy and sterling spiritual attainments, he occupies a place with Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ and Mohammed among the founders of the world religions. He is called Jina, the conqueror, but he was a unique conqueror who never conquered kingdoms. Instead, he vanquished the desires and passions which enslaved man, and he is called Mahavir because of his absolute self-conquest.[1]

Mahavir was born in 539 BC[2] as the son of Siddhartha, the Lichhavi ruler of Vaishali, and Trishala, the sister of Chetaka, another Lichhavi chief. Before his birth, his mother saw fourteen auspicious dreams, which foretold the glorious future of the child. Thus, like Buddha, Mahavir too was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and enjoyed an oligarchical life, which considerably influenced his thoughts and teachings.

At his birth a soothsayer foretold that he would either be an emperor or a prophet. He was trained and educated as prince, and was married and had a daughter. However, the world could not ensnare him for long. After the death of his parents, Mahavir renounced the world with the permission of his elder brother and became an ascetic at the age of thirty.

For more than twelve years Mahavir led a wandering life, begging his food, undertaking rigorous austerities and practising deep meditation. He adopted complete nudity when at the end of a thirteen month long austerity, the only garment he was wearing fell away from his body. During this period he had to forbear severe persecutions at the hands of the ignorant. Finally he attained enlightenment under a *sāla* tree in the village Jrimbhika, on the bank of river Rajukula, at the age of forty-two. He then became an *arhat* (worthy) and a *tirthankara*, and began to preach his doctrine.

Mahavir worked as a spiritual preceptor in the states of the Gangetic belt for thirty years. Over this period he gained a large

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1. Radhakrishnan, S., *Religion and Culture*, 1987, p. 134.
2. Majumdar, R.C., *Cultural Heritage of India*, Chapter II, ed. by H. Bhattacharya, 1983, vol. IV, p. 36. The traditional date of birth, viz. 599 BC, has not been accepted by modern scholars.

following drawn from all walks of life, irrespective of caste and sex. His contemporary kings became his followers and patronized his faith. He left his mortal coil at the ripe age of seventy-two, in 467 BC[3], in a little village called Pava, near Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha.

HIS PHILOSOPHY

The sixth century BC may be regarded as an important landmark in the history of world philosophy and religion, since during this period the axis of world thought shifted from the study of nature to the study of man.[4] There was a flood of new philosophies and philosophers in several parts of the world, such as China, Greece, Iran and India.

That was also a period of resurgence of Indian religion and philosophy. Numerous philosophers were propagating their philosophies from different platforms and were trying their best to convince the eager but confused masses. It was also an age of political conflict, philosophical unrest, social turmoil, disintegration of faith and keen intellectual inquiry.[5]

Discontent with the existing state of things, brooding over the ills and sorrows of life, a passionate desire to eliminate them by searching out a new way to salvation, and an earnest attempt to discover the ultimate reality became the order of the day. Under these circumstances, sharing the growing contemporary pessimism two eminent heterodox philosophers, Mahavir and Buddha, appeared on the philosophical horizon of India.

Mahavir cannot be regarded as the founder of Jainism, as it existed even before him. However, he gave a new orientation to the faith, and modern Jainism for all practical purposes can be regarded as an outcome of his teachings.[6]

Mahavir, like Buddha, rejected the existence of God the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world, which, according to him, functions according to a universal law. Although he denied god, he did not deny godhood. Every liberated soul is akin to God. Thus the world-creating god was replaced by the *tirthankaras,* who, though mortal beings like us, attained liberation by personal effort. Thus, everyone is potentially divine, and Mahavir urges us to attain our own salvation.

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The Jain metaphysics is a realistic and relativistic pluralism. It is called *anekāntavāda,* or the doctrine of many-sided-ness of reality.[7] According to Mahavir, absolute knowledge, or *kevala-jñāna,* is the goal. Every object has innumerable characters—*ananta-dharmakam-vastu*—, but in our present state we know only a part of the truth or reality. He alone who has overcome his passions can know the whole of reality.

The metaphysical thesis that reality has innumerable characters is called *anekānta-*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
4. *Religion and Culture,* p. 134.
5. Nehru, J., *Discovery of India,* p. 101.
6. Sharma, Chandradhar, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy,* 1979, p. 48.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

vāda; and the epistemological corollary that we can know only a few aspects of the reality, and that therefore all our judgements are necessarily relative, is called *syādvāda,* the theory of relativity of knowledge. They are the two facets of the same teaching of realistic and relativistic pluralism.

The doctrine of *anekantavada* may be considered an elaboration of the *Rg-Vedic* dictum, *ekam sat, viprā bahudā vadanti:* truth is one, sages call it variously. As a matter of fact, *anekantavada* was a philosophical development of the Vedic principle in the historical setting of oligarchical proto-democracy—to which Mahavir belonged—, where decisions by majority were welcome.

Mahavir taught that our views of reality are hypothetical and partial. They are complementary rather than contradictory. This principle has been well-demonstrated by the parable of the six blind men and the elephant. The blind men touched the different parts of the animal, and each tried to describe the whole animal in terms of the part touched by him. The lesson conveyed to us is that we should give up prejudice and should respect the opinions of others. Almost all philosophical, ideological and religious differences, which create conflicts in our social and national life, arise due to such prejudices. Thus, the doctrine of *anekantavada* may be termed as the philosophy of philosophical democracy, which is the fundamental theme of Indian culture.

According to Mahavir the universe is eternal, and functions through the interaction of *jīva* and *ajīva,* i.e. living and non-living substances. The latter includes matter *(pudgala),* time *(kāla),* space *(ākāśa),* and conditions of motion and rest *(dharma* and *adharma).* The living beings, or souls are of two kinds—those that are capable of movement *(trasa),* and those that are immobile *(stlıāvara).* These immobile and the most imperfect kind of souls have bodies made of earth, water, fire, air, or plants, and have only the sense of touch, i.e. tactile consciousness.

The soul is inherently perfect. It has infinite potentiality within. Infinite knowledge, infinite faith, infinite power, and infinite bliss can all be attained by the soul if it can remove the obstacles. In the state of bondage, these characteristics are obscured by matter-particles, or *pudgala,* which infect the soul due to its karma. For example, passions attract to the soul the appropriate sort of matter-particles and organize them into the kind of body desired consciously or unconsciously. Since passions are produced due to ignorance, the latter is considered the real cause of bondage.

Thus, the doctrine of anekantavada may be termed as the philosophy of philosophical democracy, which is the fundamental theme of Indian culture.

The flow of karma-matter into the soul is called *āsrava,* or influx. The state in which a *jīva* infected with passions takes up matter and gets united with it is called bondage, or *bandha.* Liberation is attained by stopping the influx of new matter into the soul as well as by completely eliminating the accumulated material. The first process is called *samvara* (i.e. stoppage of influx), and the second *nirjara,* or wearing out. This is done by right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The state of complete freedom from the bondage of matter is called *moksha,* or liberation. This is characterized by the attainment of the four-fold infinite perfection *(ananta-chatuṣṭaya),* i.e. infinite faith, infinite knowledge, infinite power, and infinite bliss. The liberated soul goes straight

to *siddha-shila,* a place supposed to be situated at the top of the universe, and dwells there eternally.

PATH TO PERFECTION

Samyag-darśana (right faith), *samyag-jñāna* (right knowledge) and *samyag-caritra* (right conduct) together constitute the path to salvation. They are known in Jainism as *tri-ratna.* Right faith is the belief in the teachings of the omniscient *tirthaṇkaras* and the seven *tattvas,* i.e. fundamental principles, viz. *jīva, ajīva, bandha, moksha, āsrava, samvara* and *nirjara.*

Right knowledge corresponds to what is called *kevala-jñāna,* or final illumination. But mere knowledge is useless unless it is put into practice. Right conduct is therefore equally important. Right conduct helps one to control one's mind and senses in the light of right knowledge. Right knowledge without right conduct is lame, while the latter without the former is blind. Mahavir insists that there must be a balance between knowledge and conduct in the life of a person.

Non-violence is the central theme of Mahavir's teachings, and he does not endorse any religious act that does not promote the cause of non-violence.

Mahavir prescribed two courses of five-fold moral disciplines, one for householders and the other for monks. In both the cases the moral code is based on the doctrine of non-violence *(ahiṁsā).* For the monks it is extremely strict, rigid and puritanic, while for the lay disciples there are relaxations. The five vows for the householders are called *anu-vratas* (minor vows), and for the monks they are called *mahā-vratas* (major vows). They are *ahiṁsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *āsteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (continence), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness). These must be observed in thought, word and deed.

Non-violence is the central theme of Mahavir's teachings, and he does not endorse any religious act that does not promote the cause of non-violence. Non-violence means causing no injury by thought, word or deed, either intentionally or unintentionally, to any living creature including animals and even insects. Meat eating is totally forbidden for monks as well as householders.

Monks use dusters made of wool or feathers for removing ants and other insects from their way, to avoid their being trampled under foot.[8] Likewise, water is strained before drinking, and a strip of cloth is worn on the mouth to avoid injuring minute imperceptible creatures from being killed while drinking, eating or speaking. These precautions may appear ridiculous exaggerations, but they do underscore the principle of non-violence as is done in no other religion. However, it became impractical for the masses.[9]

Ideologically, non-violence is the philosophy of universal love. A truly non-violent person cannot help loving all the creatures of the world. Love leads to the realization of oneness with all and the destruction of hatred and its various manifestations. Mahavir was a teacher of universal sovereign love, which is the mark of a perfectly non-violent person.

Mahavir did not allow religion to become the monopoly of any particular caste or class. He advocated equality *(samatā)* and gave spiritual instructions to all, irrespective

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8. Basham, A.L., *The Wonder That Was India,* 1985, p. 292.
9. Pande, V.C., *Prachin Bharat Ka Rajnaitik Tatha Sanskritic Itihas,* 1980, p. 302.

of caste, class and sex. He boldly condemned caste on the basis of birth, and proclaimed that a person must be regarded as *brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya* or *shudra* according to his or her karma.

Women were also permitted to become lay disciples or nuns. According to Jain tradition, there were 3,18,000 female Jain lay devotees and 36,000 nuns at the time of Mahavir[10]. Chandana, the daughter of Dadhivardhana, the king of Champa, was the first Jain nun. Thus Mahavir revived the old tradition of Gargi and Maitreyi, and restored their lost honour and dignity to women, who for past centuries were deprived of spiritual truths.

Therefore, one will have to choose one and give up the other. It would of course be wise to choose the immortal for the mortal, and the eternal for the ephemeral. Momentary worldly pleasures must not be allowed to exploit this precious human life—which is a rare privilege and opportunity.

The life of Mahavir demonstrates that truth is more valuable in life than anything else. The seekers of truth do not care for even death. If we want truth, we must be prepared to embrace death. Hence great significance is attached to an ascetic life, which entails complete control of the senses, total detachment from the world, and the practice of severe austerities.

In the Jain faith, there is no possibility of liberation together with a worldly life. They are contradictory and cannot co-exist. Therefore, one will have to choose one and give up the other. It would of course be wise to choose the immortal for the mortal, and the eternal for the ephemeral. Momentary worldly pleasures must not be allowed to exploit this precious human life—which is a rare privilege and opportunity. Thousands of lives can be sacrificed for the realization of Truth. However, since Jainism greatly emphasizes non-violence and an ascetic life, it could not become popular with the masses, and has shrunk into a religion of the minority.

10. *Kalpasūtra*, pp. 134–7.

CONCLUSION

The familiar images of Mahavir depict him as a meditative sage, a yogi, absorbed and withdrawn within, merged in the joy of meditation on the soul. This may be considered symbolic of the fact that Mahavir did not recommend textual learning and ritualistic practices. Religious texts only provide the outline; they do not lead us into the innermost depths of reality, which could be attained only by meditation. Today humanity is suffering from an identity-crisis. Man has wrongly identified himself with his mortal physical frame. That is why he has fallen into the blind race for power, pelf and possessions. Despite all his scientific and technological achievements he is still unhappy and dissatisfied. How ridiculous it is that he is ignorant about the secret of his real existence and bliss, which lie within his own soul! Mahavir tells us that we are basically souls, and human life is an important and rare opportunity for its realization. The ultimate aim of life is to attain liberation, the state of eternal bliss and knowledge, free from sorrow and desires, decay and disease, birth and death. Mahavir showed us the path to eternal life and shall be remembered till eternity. ❐

Knowledge is better than wealth. You have to look after wealth, knowledge looks after you.

—*Ali*, a Sufi saint

Is the Question of Morality Irrelevant in Advaita Vedanta?

MS. SANGHAMITRA DASGUPTA

Advaita Vedanta is the most accommodating and rational of all religious thought systems. This accounts for its spreading fame and usefulness to modern man. The learned author, who is a senior lecturer and Head of the Dept. of Philosophy in Vivekananda College at Alipurduar (District Jalpaiguri, W.B.), discusses briefly an important point that comes up in the minds of students and the religious-minded.

Purpose and Plan of the Paper:

In this paper an attempt will be made to evaluate the charge against Advaita Vedanta that it obliterates the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad, along with the denial of all kinds of duality. In other words, the charge that 'moral concepts', which are said to be the cornerstone for meaningful living in any society, do not have any room in the teaching of the Non-dualistic school of Vedanta, will be evaluated here. In doing this we propose to make special reference to the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. And in order of treatment we shall first briefly exposite the philosophical position of Swami Vivekananda and then proceed to assess the charge.

In philosophical circles, Swami Vivekananda is known as one of the finest flowers of Indian Culture and an astoundingly remarkable interpreter of modern Indian Philosophy. In the modern Indian philosophical literature, dominated by scientific and secular outlook, we see a revival of the traditional wisdom in a new format in order to suit the changed socio-cultural context. A modern interpreter of Indian philosophy is one who can stretch the sublime thoughts of old moulds without breaking them. In short, a modernist both respects tradition and claims freedom from it.

Vivekananda himself pleases to call his Philosophy 'Practical Vedanta'. Herein we get a reconciliation of the traditional Non-dualistic philosophy with the changing world-order. It is Vedanta applied in the practical world. Vivekananda's philosophy is dominated by a consideration of the practical necessity of understanding how life can best be lived.[1] The aim of it is rather the satisfaction of an enlightened life with 'far-sight, foresight, and insight.[2] Vivekananda holds that if someone thinks about the other social beings as his own self, and leads a life of action *(karma)* connected with moral values of human welfare *(bahu-jana-hitāya)*, it is the 'good life'. Vivekananda often calls such a one an Advaitin.

The whole Advaitic teaching may be summed up in the following: Brahman is the only Reality, the multiplicity of the world is false *(mithyā)*, and the individualized soul

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1. The word 'practical' as it is understood in Indian Philosophy is not used in the same sense that truth is measured in terms of practices, as understood by the Pragmatists such as James, Schiller, and others, but rather that truth is the most dependable guide for practice.
2. See: S.C. Chatterjee and D.M. Datta: *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1968), p. 12.

(jīva) is identical with Brahman from the ultimate standpoint *(pāramārthika-dṛṣṭi).*[3]

Vivekananda contends that the whole world is full of God, and there is no fundamental difference between the personal God and the Absolute. Without contradicting the basic Advaitic principle that *Reality is One,* Vivekananda argues that, since the world is a creation of God, and God creates the world by involving Himself, the world cannot be illusory or unreal. In Vivekananda's philosophy the famous assertion of Śaṅkara, 'Brahman is all', is transformed into, 'All this is nothing but Brahman.' He considers this world as the expression of the Infinite in the finite forms. Thus the worship of Individualized beings *(jīvas),* according to Vivekananda, is a programme of spiritual practice that can lead a person to the highest goal, that is, to the goal of God-realization.

Vivekananda argues that, since the world is a creation of God, and God creates the world by involving Himself, the world cannot be illusory or unreal.

For Vivekananda, when in the Advaita Vedanta the world is described as false *(mithyā),* it is only in a specific technical sense. By the word *false,* Vivekananda contends the Advaitins intend to place emphasis on the point that the world is the expression of Reality, and thus it cannot be totally unreal *(asat).* Advaita only points to the world's impermanence—the constantly changing and varying nature of the universe. The world is an admixture of being and becoming; permanency is not its nature. The world is called *māyā,* because it has an indeterminate form between 'absolute being' and 'non-being'. To Vivekananda, *māyā* is a statement of fact about the universe as it is experienced by the *jīvas.*

Let us now sum up the ground for the charge. It has been objected that, if Brahman be the sole Reality and all distinctions are false, then the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad, would be eliminated. In other words, the metaphysical identity of the finite and the Infinite leaves no room for ethics. And such a philosophic teaching is fatally dangerous for society. Schweitzer objected that 'the Hindu doctrine of *māyā* declares that life is an illusion, contains the ideas of flow of the world and life-negation, and in consequence Hindu thought is non-ethical.'[4]

But, as a modern interpreter of Indian Philosophy, Vivekananda would at once react to this by saying that the metaphysical truth of 'identity without difference' cannot stand in the way of making a distinction between right and wrong, good and bad, at the *mundane level,* where the fact of duality in the form of becoming cannot be ignored. The very nature of mundane life is that it is an admixture of *sadasat;* that is, it expresses relativity.

In Vedantic teaching, any action that helps one to realize one's essential identity with the Absolute is the *good* and that which

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3. *Brahma-satyam-jaganmithyā jīvo-brahmaiva-nāparah.*

4. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Thought and Its Development* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, Ltd., 1936), p. 76.

S. Radhakrishnan, in his *Mysticism and Ethics in Hindu Thought,* also refutes Schweitzer's charges one after another. In *Indian Philosophy,* vol. 2, he says: 'One who has shaken himself free from selfishness is at liberty to take upon himself the task of the world. His attitude will be not world-seeking or world-fleecing but world-saving.' (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927), p. 633.

stands in the way of realizing this is the *bad*. It is indeed true that no one would object to admit that the categories such as truthfulness, charity, benevolence, self-control, etc. come under the first category (the good), and falsehood, selfishness, etc. under the second (the bad).

The goal of morality is to lift 'oneself above one's individuality and become one with the universal spirit of the universe.'[5] The liberated individual, for Vedanta, is the ideal of society. He does not work for himself, but for others. Though such an individual will be in the world, the world will not be within him. That is to say, he will be lifted above the worldly selfish attachments of 'me and mine' and treat others as himself. Such a state of being is verily described in Advaita Vedanta as the state of *jīvanmukti* (released, liberated, even while in the body).

A crucial question can be raised here. Is social service compatible with the state of *jivanmukti?* In reply, it can be said: a *jīvanmukta*, according to the Advaitins, can do all actions *(karmas)* out of his old habits generated through the accumulated results of *karma*. Hence, when he does work for the welfare of human beings *(lokasaṅgraha)*, he does so naturally, and cannot have credit *(abhimāna)* for so doing.

According to Vivekananda, when an Advaitic individual being renders his service to others, he is aware that he is doing this considering the Divinity in man. So he is a moral person. And a moral person cannot be an egoist. Besides egoism is not a satisfactory theory of moral obligation.

For Vivekananda, the essential characteristics of morality are contained in the thesis of the unity of the transcendental and the immanent spiritual principles as expressed in the Upaniṣadic dictum: 'Thou art That' *(Tat tvam asi)*. He considers the category of 'unselfishness' to be the criterion for distinguishing between what is moral and what is immoral. 'That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.'[6] In this connection Vivekananda makes a distinction between the tendency that leads to selfishness and the tendency that leads to unselfishness. The first one is called *pravṛtti*, revolving outward (to multiplicity), and the second is *nivṛtti*, inward movement to unity. The former makes a person egoistic, and the latter, truly moral.

On account of the first tendency, a human being takes everything from everywhere and heaps it for satisfying his own sweet will. It functions with the awareness of 'I' and 'mine' and cannot be the basis of morality. *Nivṛtti*, on the contrary, is the tendency that eliminates selfishness and helps a person to realize his own divine substance—*That*—the true nature of the all-same universal Self. This type of realization at once vanquishes egoism.

> *In Vivekananda's philosophy the famous assertion of Śaṅkara, 'Brahman is all', is transformed into, 'All this is nothing but Brahman.'*

While speaking about morality, in *Jñāna-Yoga*, Swamiji speaks about 'the real man' and 'apparent man'. The first one is a person who rose to the highest level of morality and realized his fundamental identity with the Absolute immanent in all. But

(Continued on page 349)

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 626.

6. 'Karma Yoga' in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 110; hereafter *C.W.*

Vivekananda: The Poet

CHHOTE LAL KHATRI

This is an original and objective appraisal of Swamiji's poetic skill, based not on mere technicalities but, rightly, on the recognition that his poems were mystical inspirations. Swamiji brought his poetry close to the Vedic mantras, *observes the author.*

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The literary world, by and large, has not recognized Vivekananda as a poet. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar makes a diffident comment in his *Indian Writing in English* by saying of Swamiji that, 'occasionally he essayed English verse, too,....'[1] If the quantity of verse is a measure of one's being, say, a poet or not, Swamiji is certainly not a poet, for he wrote only thirty-five poems including one in Hindi, two in Sanskrit, two translations of Sanskrit poems and seven Bengali poems. But if the 'poetic value' and 'ulterior value'[2] of the poems are any standard in the criticism of poetry, as held by I.A. Richards, he certainly should be recognized as a poet.

Swami Vivekananda's firsthand experience of the inner working of the soul that reflects in his poems is a great end in itself, and hence has 'intrinsic value'. This is 'poetic value'. The moral of self-liberation, the well-being of the world, and the teachings of the perennial religion that is the Advaita Vedanta may well be called the 'ulterior value' of his poetry. This much is true in Iyengar's sweeping remark that he wrote poems 'occasionally'. But they are not 'essayed', rather they are composed with reasonable metrical facility, and they exhibit Vivekananda's mastery of poetic expression and rich poetic sensibility. Saraswati Gowrishankar, in an illuminating article, 'The Poet Vivekananda', records her impression in these words:

> It is of some significance to our subject to note that Swamiji's earliest interests were music and poetry, religion and philosophy; no wonder also that his works, rich in philosophical content, constitute in their perfection of imagery and purity of language some of the finest literature of the day.

We may well recall how Swamiji once remarked to Miss MacLeod: 'Do you not see that I am first and foremost a poet?' But poetry to him was neither a mere literary form nor even a vehicle for the expression of his philosophy. Poetry was to him what Romain Rolland says it was: 'a flight of faith, without which a bird becomes a mere mechanical toy.'

His lyrical effusions are 'romantic' and pervaded by the poet's individuality, non-dualism, his craving for a union with the Supreme Lord. What permeates his lyrics, we know, is the poet's central theme, or his Advaitic Vedanta, embedded in which are also his subtle aesthetics and credo.

> The wounded snake its hood unfurls,
> The flame stirred up doth blaze,

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1. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English,* 1985, p. 52.
2. I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* p. 56.

The desert air resounds the calls
Of heart-struck lion's rage.
The cloud puts forth its deluge strength
When lightning cleaves its breast,
When the soul is stirred to its inmost depth
Great ones unfold their best!....[3]

True, it is only some flat patches of didacticism that seem to be bereft of the purple touches one finds in genuine poetry. But where the poet tries to bring home to the readers his thoughtful convictions, he becomes no less matter-of-fact than a prosaic preacher:

Few only know the truth. The rest
will hate
And laugh at thee, great one;
But pay no heed....[4]

And, at times, he lapses into doctrine and when he does so, the euphony of the poem breaks. Another obvious limitation of his poetry is that he could not develop a definite form of poetry, and tried his hand in no other genre of poetry than lyric. His songs, minus some such patches of prosiness, are all spontaneous overflow of a soul charged with genuine feelings.

Vivekananda is one of those poets who remind the reader of the great western mystics, even of the Sufis, like Rumi and others. Insofar as his essential experiences are concerned, they remind us of St. John of the Cross, Richard Rolle of Hampole, St. Catherine of Sienne, St. Francis of Assissi, and others. Blake is another mystic whose affinity with the Swami cannot be denied or challenged. Just as in oratory he is akin to Lancelot Andrews, Donne, Hooker and Newman, so in poetry he does not fail to remind the reader of the romantic mystics who often voice pantheistic experiences so akin to Vivekananda's.

The Swami broke away from the poetic trends of the 'Derozio men' and experimented with a new kind of lyric form of his own. His spiritual and mystic creativity led to the development of *mantric* poetry, which was later perfected by Aurobindo. The Swami brought poetry close to the Vedic *mantra*. It was natural for him to opt for the medium of the Vedic *mantra* though he was conversant with the poetic trends in English literature.

As we know he translated a portion of the *maṇḍala* 10 of the *Ṛg-Veda* in the poem entitled, 'The Hymn of Creation'. Akhauri Rajendra Prasad, in an article, 'The Poetical Corpus of Vivekananda', compares it with *Savitri:*

His spiritual and mystic creativity led to the development of mantric *poetry, which was later perfected by Aurobindo. The Swami brought poetry close to the Vedic* mantra. *It was natural for him to opt for the medium of the Vedic* mantra *though he was conversant with the poetic trends in English literature.*

> The opening lines of 'The Hymn of Creation'...in majesty and poetic beauty remind us of the opening lines of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri,* with the only difference that what Sri Aurobindo achieves with labour and strain is effortlessly and spontaneously achieved by Vivekananda.[5]

Prasad's comments seem rather exaggerated or they may be born of admiration. There is a great difference between the two

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3. 'The Song of the Free' in *In Search of God and other Poems* of Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975), p. 6; hereafter *Poems.*
4. 'The Song of the Sannyasin' in *Poems,* p. 18.
5. *Indian Writing in English,* Ed. K.N. Sinha, p. 81.

works. The majesty or 'poetic beauty' of 'The Hymn of Creation' is not his own, it is drawn from the majesty of the *Ṛg-Veda*. And, again, it is just a minute fragment of the *Ṛg-Veda* and not the complete body. Aurobindo's achievement is his own and his *Savitri* is a complete body, and is the product of his own poetic genius. It is at par with the epics of Milton. But both are mystic poets or, to use another expression, 'overhead' poets. What the Swami initiated in English poetry, Aurobindo brought to fruition.

The līlā*-concept is not far removed from Swamiji's thought. As a matter of fact, true spirituality springs from some such convictions that creation is a sort of divine play and that God is not only* Sat *and* Cit *but also* Ānanda.

One marvels at the charismatic mode of the poet which transforms devotion into rich poetry. What is a tribute to 'Kali the Mother' is a tribute to nature as well. The poet ransacks nature for his imagery and communication of the full gamut of his experiences. Nature provides him with appropriate symbols and images, most of which are hard and concrete, visual and picturesque, as in the following:

> The stars are blotted out,
> The clouds are covering clouds.
> It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
> In the roaring, whirling wind
> Are the souls of a million lunatics
> Just loosed from the prison-house,....[6]

In many of the poet's works, we find the recurrent theme of nature imaged and symbolized as Creatrix. God to him was not only the Father immanent in the universe but also the Creatrix at play. The *līlā*-concept is not far removed from Swamiji's thought. As a matter of fact, true spirituality springs from some such convictions that creation is a sort of divine play and that God is not only *Sat* and *Cit* but also *Ānanda*.

In him there is no irrational pessimism and nihilism of the atheist. These are born of ignorance *(avidyā)*, if not of blindness to what is happening all around. If nature is free and beyond all human control, if God's sovereignty is unchallengeable and subjugates every earthly creature, one would partake of God's *ānanda*, of Mother's play.

> If things go ill or well—
> If joy rebounding spreads the face,
> Or sea of sorrow swells—
> It is a dream, a play.
> A play—we each have part
> Each one to weep or laugh as may;
> Each one his dress to don—
> Alternate shine or rain.[7]

Considered in their entirety the poems reveal a thematic design and a pattern. It is not only imagery and Advaita philosophy that impose a unity or a design upon Vivekananda's lyrics: it is also an undercurrent of the philosophy enshrined in his Bhakti Yoga that knits the mystical songs together. Listen to the clarion call of 'Eternal Love' and 'Service Free' in the poem, 'To the Awakened India', embracing in itself all the principal forms of Yoga—particularly Bhakti and Karma Yogas.

These poems can be called the outpouring of the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Though they were composed at different times, they can be read as a single whole, a body of poetry, and not as scattered poems on different subjects. The volume of a work is immaterial. What matters is the recurrent theme of Vedantism in his works—be it his writings, lectures, letters, or poems. It is Vedanta that gives unity of body and spirit to his works. ❐

6. 'Kali the Mother' in *Poems*, p. 25.

7. 'Thou Blessed Dream' in *Poems*, p. 32.

Unpublished Letters *

These are a few recently found letters of Swamis Abhedananda, Yogananda and Nirmalananda to Sri Jwaladutt Joshi of Almora, who of course is no more. Joshi, an advocate, was a good Sanskrit scholar, a linguist, and an upright spiritual aspirant. He was also well acquainted with most of the first-generation leaders of the Indian National Congress.

Devout as he was, he had naturally come to know closely those disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji who during their monastic wanderings had visited Almora. These letters show their affectionate relationship. Sri Joshi had great reverence for Sri Ramakrishna too, about whom he must have learnt during his visits to Calcutta at the call of his profession. Interestingly, this is the Joshi who read out the Reception Committee's Hindi Address of Welcome to Swamiji when after his first return from the West he visited Almora also.

C/o Thakur Saheb Hari Singhjee
Commander-in-Chief,
Chandpole gate (Rajputana)

Jeypore City,
25th Nov. 1895

My dear Jwaladuttjee,

Since you left us at Almora, we have not got any news of you. We are now very anxious to know how you are now doing both mentally and physically. Have you got the medicines from the Kaviraj in Calcutta? If so please let us know whether you feel yourself in any way better by using them or not.

As for us we did not write any letters to you because we could not stay at any place for a long time. From Almora we came via Nainital to Bareilly. There we stayed for five days only. Thence we came to Agra and thence to Jeypore. We are now enjoying good health here. We have a desire to go from here to Ajmere & Pushkar. We cannot assure you how long we will stay here.

We don't find any good press here, and consequently we are at present obliged to give up the idea of publishing here the *Uktis* in Hindi. We thought that the Maharaja of Khetri

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* These were kindly made available to us through the efforts of Swami Videhatmananda, Raipur, Madhya Pradesh, the editor of our Order's Hindi journal, *Vivek-Jyoti*. The original spellings in the letters have been retained; where necessary we have added ',' etc. and italicized some words; in a place or two we have added the correction in '()' with a '?', or put '...' where the original was illegible; and, where absolutely essential, we have corrected a few words for the sake of grammar, without changing the original sense.

has got a good press of his own, but that is not the case; moreover we don't like to request the Maharaja for the publication of the *Uktis*. Gangadhar Swami is now at Khetri. We have not yet met with him. We do not like to go to Khetri. Our Guru Maharaja only knows when his *Uktis* will be out.

Do not forget to pray daily to our Lord. Try to concentrate your mind by the daily practice of meditation for half an hour at least everyday. Always try to keep the image of Bhagawan Ramkrishna vivid before your mental eye. Let your tongue always utter His holy name, and with your hands do all your works. In so doing, I can assure you that you will undoubtedly find the peace of your mind within a short time.

Swami Sadananda is now at Hrishikesha. Swami Nirmalananda is now with me. Swami Vivekananda is now busily engaged in delivering lectures in England. Perhaps you have already seen the reports of his lectures in the *Indian Mirror* and *The Observer*. In Prince's Hall there was held a large meeting on the 22nd Oct. on which occasion Mr. E.T. Sturdy was the president and the Swami lectured on Hinduism. Have you got any letters from Mr. Sturdy?

Please try to secure some contributions for the *Brahmavadin*. I think you are now getting the journal regularly.

May the blessings of Bhagawan Ramkrishna attend on you. Hoping you are now doing well, and awaiting your early reply, I remain yours etc.

Avedananda

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श्री श्री रामकृष्णो जयति

Darjeeling
9-5-96

My dear Jwaladuttjee,

Your letter dated the ..... Inst. is duly to hand. (It is?) ... actually surprising to me to learn that you being a resident of the cold climate, how can (are able to?) bear the unbearable heat of the N.W. Provinces. Why don't you intend to pass the summer in the colder regions of the Himalayas? Perhaps the pressure of business has detained you there. You have not written anything of the manner in which your practice is now going on. Darjeeling is a more beautiful place than all other hill stations that I have seen. Especially the view of the Kanchanjungha & the adjacent snowy range surpasses all the beauty of the other quarter of the Himalayas. It is raining here incessantly. The weather is very pleasant. I do not know how long I will stay here; most probably ... get down the hills just before the rainy season sets in here with full force. In fact it depends on the condition of our health. As long as the climate of this place will suit our health we will stay here.

As regards the details of your religious practices I advise you to sit regularly just at

day break for meditation after finishing all necessary *Nitya Karmas.*[1] After sitting you should utter for a while the sacred name of Hari (हरि बोल, हरि बोल) clapping your hands & at the same time contemplating on the image of our Lord. This process you should continue until your mind's eye can see vividly the features of the image. When you will see the image distinctly you should stop the clapping & uttering the name, but concentrate your mind on the feet of the image within you. If any other thought rushes in, try to drive it out with due discrimination or विचार, but if the strength of विचार... (fails to?) drive it out, better pray to our Lord & He will give sufficient strength in your mind. You know fully well how difficult it is to conquer or check the course of our mind, but if you practise in this manner you will surely succeed in the long run by the grace of our Lord. The manner in which you labour for worldly success undoubtedly brings on its consequent results but I can assure you that if you do one fourth of that labour for spiritual progress you will acquire peace & tranquillity of your mind in no time. Have patience & perseverance. Be prayerful & devote one hour at least in the morning & one in the evening for meditation. You should recite the sacred name of Bhagawan Ramkrishna every now & then. This simple process will help you in your attempt. Have you got any letter from Mr. Sturdy? I am now doing well. Hope you are all right. My best love & good wishes to you.

Yours sincerely
Avedananda

P.S. My address is Lewis Sanitarium
(Darjeeling)

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श्री श्री गुरु देवो जयति

Allumbazar Math,
P.O. Baranagore, Calcutta.
1st December/96

My dear Panditji,

Since our brother Abhedananda left Calcutta for London I have not got any news of you. I beg to be excused for not writing any letter to you so long. It is due to my idle habits as you know. Notwithstanding my idleness to write to you I was not deprived of the pleasure of learning all about you from your letters to Abhedananda. He used to let one go through all the letters that you wrote to him. How are you getting on nowadays physically & spiritually? Have you got any letter from Abhedananda? If not, here is a good piece of news. Last mail brought us two letters. One from Abhedananda and the other from Swami Vivekananda. In the latter we are glad to find that brother Abhedananda gave a lecture on 'Panchadasi & its teachings' for the first time before an English audience. Of course he grew a little nervous at first but he soon got over it and the delivery was nice. He will deliver another shortly on 'Reincarnation & Karma'. He will have to take the Vedanta Classes there when Swami Vivekananda returns to India just after Christmas. Most probably he will reach Calcutta by middle of January next. How is the climate of Allahabad at present? Have you come down to Allahabad alone or with your family? Calcutta seems to be very busy

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1. Toilet.

in making the National Congress all success. Meetings are held in different places for the election of delegates and necessary funds are being collected. Will you be able to come down here on the occasion? How glad we shall be to have you amongst ourselves again. Whenever I indulge myself to look back to those happy days that were spent in your company at Almora, I almost forget the place I am (in?) and actually feel myself as if present before you talking, singing & doing all those little things that I used to do there. You were all love & kindness. How sweet, how delightful is that memory! Don't think that I have forgotten you. Those associations are quite vivid in my mind and nothing can efface them from the tablet of my mind. Will you please let us know any freshness (fresh news?) if you got from Mr. Sturdy? I close this with my best Namaskar & love. Hoping to hear from you soon. Trusting this will find you in the enjoyment of sound health & peace of mind.

I remain

Your ever affectionate brother,
Nirmalananda

✺ ✺ ✺

Math, Belur,
P.O. Belur
26.2.98

My dear Jwala Bu,

Your letter duly to hand. Recently we have changed our Math to Belur, so it is the (reason for the?) delay in getting your remittance. However, we may expect it shortly. Glad to know that you have written the parables of Guru Maharaj in Hindi. Swami Abhedanand is now at New York, 19 West 38th Street, U.S.A. Swami Saradanand is now at the Math. Swami Nirmalanand is now at Ice House, Triplicane, Madras. I am still in the same state. At one time feeling better at another worse. How are you all there? Our good wishes to you.

Yours affectionately,
Jogananda

✺ ✺ ✺

Math, Belur
28th Feb, 98.

My dear Joshiji,

I have received your M.O. of Rs. 16/- duly. I have also received your *Drishtanta Samuchchaya* (25 copies). Please write all your letters to the following address for our Math has been removed here from Alambazar. I am all right. Hope you are doing well. My love to you.

Yours truly,
Jogananda

Jwalla Dutt Joshi
Pleader High Court
Allahabad, N.W.P.

✺ ✺ ✺

Tune in to Silence

V. DHURANDHAR *

Tune in to the keynote of silence
Beyond the mind's medley of violence.
Turn the needle of attention inward, be intense
In the awareness of your essence;
O give up your ambivalence!
How long will you teeter on the fence,
Carrying on this make-believe, this pretense?
You are bone poor, not knowing the opulence
Of your true nature—the clouds are not so dense
That light cannot pierce them; hence plunge
through laminated nescience
Into the Heart of your being. Without getting tense,
Focus all your intelligence
On the liberating question: Who am I? Or whence
This I-ness? The answer is the Self's efflorescence
As Pure Consciousness. And you glory in the ambience
Of a cosmic stillness, an overwhelming silence.

Mundaka-Upanishad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

CHAPTER I

ॐ ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संबभूव
विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।
स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठा-
मथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह ॥

Oṁ brahmā devānāṁ prathamaḥ
saṁbabhūva
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā;
Sa brahma-vidyāṁ sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhām
atharvāya jyeṣṭha-putrāya prāha. (I.i.1)

Oṁ! Brahmā arose as the first of the gods, the creator of the universe and the protector of the world. To his eldest son Atharva, he imparted the knowledge of Brahman, the foundation of all knowledge.

Oṁ is recited to remind us that beyond the gross, subtle and causal is the Essence. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* says that all objects of clay, in spite of their differing names, forms and utility are but clay[1]. The purpose of the Upaniṣads is first to understand rationally, then cogitate over and finally, experience Brahman suggested by *Oṁ*.

This first *Muṇḍaka śloka* (verse) takes for granted that we need some explanation of the Eternal Being in a manner we can understand. *Brahma-vidyā* is being studied here, but what is its source, authority and sanctity, and what is it actually? The *śloka* is in answer to such an anticipated question from any student.

Further, if somebody teaches something, the student would like to know the credentials of the teacher and also the basis of the teaching. Is it an ancient teaching, or is it the brainwave of a particular person? Hence the tendency to quote authorities in all fields of knowledge and action. Here we are about to study a subject with an ancient background, a long ancestry and lineage.

Upaniṣad implies the foundation of those ideas by coming close to which, or interacting with which, our ignorance of ourselves is demolished. The school that depicts the Absolute, the highest reach of the intellectual approach, is called *Kevala Advaita-vāda*. The ancient *ṛsis* were absolutely honest to themselves, with no compromise or stopping during their journeys carrying their ideas to logical conclusion, viz. the equation of *Sacchidānanda*, or Brahman with *Ātman*, the absolute oneness of the universal and the individual Self. From that Absolute standpoint this world is said to be an impermanent, transient flow of things and events: The Absolute is the *nirguṇa* (attributeless), *nirvikāra* (modificationless), *nirvikalpa* (subject-object relationless), Brahman, whereas the world is an appearance, equated with the mirage in a desert. But this world appears to be permanent, which it is not in reality.

The *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* exclusively deals with this Absolute, and Gauḍapāda's

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1. *Vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāro nāmadheyaṁ mṛttikā ityeva satyam* (6.1.4).

Kārikā on it says that,[2] if this creation, cosmos, had really existed, it would have definitely dissolved in time. We see diversity in this *viśwa, bhuvana,* or world, because of our ignorance; we posit its permanency, call it real and behave accordingly. We are unable to see the substratum on which this illusion is founded.

The effort of an Upaniṣad is to take us from whichever level of spiritual, moral or intellectual achievement we are in, and slowly guide us to the ultimate Reality of the *Oṁ*. However, apart from the *śabdārtha,* or the grammatical/literal meaning of the Upaniṣadic words, the problem is to reach the *lakṣyārtha,* or the hidden meaning, of the words. For example, the meaning of the word *brahman* (lit. growth, expansion, etc.) is discovered to be in line with the meaning of the Upaniṣadic sentence, *ayam ātmā brahma:* This Ātman is Brahman.

Brahmā is first among the *devatā,* gods, Viṣṇu, Maheśwara, Prajāpati, and others. That is, of all the principles of the world, he was the first to be manifested. Of such divinities he is manifested completely, *samyak-rūpeṇa babhūva.* When mortals are reborn, their birth is conditioned by their *karmas* and *saṁskāras* (physical and mental activities of past lives and their consequent impressions), which limit them. But *Brahmā* created himself by his own volition, and he had no past *karma* or *saṁskāras*. He is the first manifestation of the Divine and is perfect.

He was aware that He was the ultimate essence of the universe—this is the implication of *prathamaḥ saṁ-babhūva*. To reach the Absolute a lot of *tapasyā,* austerity, is needed, which is difficult for ordinary mortals. So the Divine, out of compassion for His children, appears to be born as human, and conducts a life as a human to set a pattern of life and behaviour for us lesser humans to follow and thus reach the ultimate goal. The First Being stands for the Absolute as Īśwara, God, who is *saguṇa, sākāra, savikalpa* (with attributes, form and subject-object relation), with all His excellence of six qualities, *sarva-jñatva* (omniscience), *sarva-īśitva* (omnipotence) etc. So here *Brahmā* is not the first of the Trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, but indicates the Saguṇa-Brahma, and omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence etc. were fully manifested in Him, the First Born. So the Divine, whose nature is absolutely *nitya* (eternal), *śuddha* (pure), *buddha* (self-aware), *mukta* (free), and also, *nirguṇa, nirākāra, nirvikalpa,* etc., has now taken a human form and become the *saguṇa, sākāra, savikalpa* Īśwara.

That Divine being one and alone, desired to be many, *eko'ham bahusyām, I am alone, let me be many,* and created the cosmos, and *tat sṛṣṭvā tadeva-anuprāviśat, having created it He entered and permeated everything with His Being*. So there is nothing else but the Divine in the world, and duality is an illusion. Since He is the creator of this cosmos, He does not reject or neglect it, but is its preserver and nurturer, just like a mother who nurtures her child by giving it a part of her being in the form of milk.

That self-created divine Being, Brahmā, passed on this *Brahma-vidyā* (knowledge of Brahman) to his eldest, first, son Atharvā. Here *first* does not refer only to time, but also means the most qualified, or adequately suited, from the point of view of eminence and ability to understand. The wisdom that is propounded is no flight of

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2. *Prapañco yadi vidyeta nivarteta na saṁśayaḥ; Māyā-mātram-idaṁ dvaitaṁ-advaitam paramārthataḥ* (I.17).

It is beyond question that the phenomenal world would cease to be if it had any existence. All this duality, which is nothing but Māyā, is but non-duality in reality.

imagination or a woolly-headed idea, but has come straight from the Divine. We are limited intellectually and emotionally, and this clouds our explanations. But Brahmā conveyed *Brahma-vidyā* totally and without ambiguity or diminishing of wisdom, because *prāha* means, spoke, i.e. taught, precisely, correctly, and perfectly. And Atharvā was competent to be a fit receptacle or vehicle for the idea of Brahman. So *Brahma-vidyā* is not an expression of a single human mind, but has the authority of a lineage and history originating from the first manifestation of Brahman Itself, viz. Brahmā.

Brahmavidyā is qualified by *sarva-vidyāpratiṣṭhāṁ:* It is the *pratiṣṭhā,* basis, the purest principle, of all knowledge that man has evolved from the dawn of history, and will continue to evolve till the last day of his survival. From the gross to the subtle the universe is material, but it is permeated by its Creator who alone is Real. So every branch of knowledge emanating from human endeavour and research, all 'isms' and ideas in search for truth, are nothing but *Brahmavidyā* through the prismatic mind of man. *Manas, buddhi, citta,* and *ahaṅkāra* form this prism, and *Brahmavidyā* appears in the form of all the sciences, arts and humanities.

The sun's rays appear white, but when passed through a prism they show a ranges of seven colours and also the two sub-range of colours, infrared and ultraviolet. Because of our ignorance we fail to see the unity of knowledge, and compartmentalize *Brahma-vidyā* which thus appears through the prismatic mind in various colours. The foundation of all *vidyās, Brahmavidyā,* which is also called *Ātmavidyā,* is all-encompassing, all-embracing. It arises when by diving deep within one knows the source of one's existence.

How does this relate to all the sciences, arts and humanities? All *jñāna,* or *vidyās,* all avenues of knowledge, start from the human being. I want to know something and start investigating and collecting information, and ultimately I master that subject. So all the subjects and knowledge are founded on the spirit of enquiry in man. The fulcrum to which this spirit is related is 'I am', 'I exist', 'I want to know'. All knowledge is founded on the fact that I am aware that 'I am'. Man's true original nature is Brahman. Somehow, because of ignorance the thirst to know my identity has taken an outward journey, and I try to unravel the mysteries of nature without first unraveling the mysteries of my own existence. The outer journey ends in the conclusion, *sarvam khalu idam brahma:* All this is indeed Brahman.

The teaching is that all you see as name and form is nothing but Brahman. And this leads to the equation of Brahman and Ātman: what is within me, that same entity is without me. So *sarvavidyā-pratiṣṭhā* suggests that all knowledge emanates from the hunger to know my true original nature, which (hunger) is at present deflected to find out the mysteries of nature.

अथर्वणे यां प्रवदेत ब्रह्माऽ-
थर्वा तां पुरोवाचाङ्गिरे ब्रह्मविद्याम् ।
स भारद्वाजाय सत्यवहाय प्राह
भारद्वाजोऽङ्गिरसे परावराम् ॥

Atharvaṇe yāṁ pravadeta brahmā'tharvā
tām purovācāṅgire brahma-vidyām;
Sa bhāradvājāya satyavahāya prāha
bhāradvājo'ṅgirase parāvarām. (I.i.2)

What Brahmā taught to Atharvā, Atharvā transmitted that to Aṅgira in ancient time. Aṅgira told it to Satyavaha of the line of Bharadvāja. He of the line of Bharadvāja (Satyavaha) handed down to Aṅgiras this knowledge that has been received in succession from the higher by the

lower ones.

The ancestry of this wisdom is now mentioned. Whatever was passed on to Atharvā by Brahmā, he spoke to his most worthy progeny Aṅgira, and Aṅgira told it to Satyavaha (which means a truthful person), the bearer of truth. From the senior to the junior, in *guru-śiṣya-paraṁparā,* it was passed on. But *satyavaha* suggests that it should not be tortured and twisted, but should be passed on with its truth undiluted from generation to generation. This *mantra* has no *lakśyārtha,* suggestive meaning, but gives dignity, authority and authenticity to *Brahmavidyā.*

(to be continued)

Is the Question of Morality Irrelevant in Advaita Vedanta?

(Continued from page 337)

'an apparent man' is one who has not realized it and is a 'bound' person, limited by space-time and causation.[7] To cope with the demands of the societal atmosphere, Vivekananda even extends the connotation of the word *mukti* to include freedom from one's own narrow outlook by becoming egoless—free from false fear, and sensitive to others.

In the opinion of Vivekananda, 'All the great systems of ethics preach absolute unselfishness as the goal. Supposing this absolute unselfishness can be reached by a man, what becomes of him?...The little personality which he had before is now lost to him for ever; he has become infinite, and the attainment of this infinite expansion is indeed the goal of all religions and of all moral and philosophical teachings.'[8] For Vivekananda, Vedanta Philosophy, instead of blocking morality, offers a rather more solid foundation for it. It is an admitted fact, is it not, that morality demands that an individual should not be selfish or should not hurt others? Vivekananda discovers an explanatory answer to this in the Advaitic teaching, according to which, 'whomsoever I hurt, I hurt myself.' It teaches us not to care what becomes of me and mine, since 'the whole universe is mine.' ❐

7. 'Jnana-Yoga' in *C.W.*, vol. 2, p. 78.

8. 'Karma Yoga' in *C.W.*, vol. 1, p. 109.

Rabia Basria is regarded as a Sufi of the first order. Her chroniclers write that, one day she left the house in such a state that in one hand she held a cauldron of fire and in the other a vessel of water. People asked her where she was going. She answered:

> By this fire I want to burn Heaven, and by this water I want to extinguish the blaze of Hell, so that both may be dstroyed and people worship God for the sake of God and not for the reward of Heaven or for the fear of Hell.

Rajak Resists Glitter, Wins a Sister*

Calcutta, Feb. 1: Rambabu Rajak, the taxi-driver who returned gold jewellery worth more than Rs. 1.5 lakh to a forgetful passenger, is an unemployed man.

He is working as a substitute for the actual driver of the vehicle (WBT 9239), who is on leave.

Despite his need, however, Rajak, 28, took the trouble of finding the rightful owner and handing back the jewellery.

Rajak hails from Arrah, in Bihar. He came to the city 10 years ago, when his father and uncle ran a laundry in Tollygunge. 'I was just 18 years old and my father asked me to learn driving, so that I could also start earning', he recounts.

Seven years ago Rajak first found employment as a taxi-driver. He would often go back to Arrah to visit his family.

He married last year and now has a three-month-old daughter, Mamta.

'I have a big family to support at home. My father is too old to work now, so he left his laundry and went back to the village', Rajak continued.

No ethics classes in school, however, have taught him honesty. 'I have hardly ever been to school', he said, smiling. 'Never liked books too much', he added. Recently, Rajak left for home and came back to find someone else driving the taxi he had been driving for years.

Last week, however, Mithilesh Prasad Shau, a resident of Tollygunge Road and owner of two taxis, was looking for a driver when his employee left for his village.

When Shau panicked that his taxi 'was not going to be on the road till the driver returned', the Bengal Taxi Association helped him find Rajak.

On January 22, Rajak started working for Shau, but only as a replacement, till the actual driver returned. The following afternoon, Rajak picked up a woman passenger, accompanied by three children, from Chetla.

He dropped off the passengers at BK Paul Avenue and soon picked up four passengers, who wanted to go to Dunlop.

At Dunlop, the passengers got off the taxi, when Rajak noticed a navy blue bag on the seat. 'I rushed to the four men but they said the bag was not their's', Rambabu recalled.

'I immediately drove to Mithilesh Shau and told him what happened', he said. Shau opened the bag and found the ornaments.

'I was impressed with the man's honesty', Shau told *The Telegraph*.

Shau contacted the Bengal Taxi Union. The union's officials asked him to trace the woman, later identified as Sunita Agarwal.

'We first went to Chetla from where the lady took the taxi', continued Shau. Upon enquiry, the two men found the house where the woman lived, but it was locked. Neighbours said they had left to attend a brother's wedding at BK Paul Avenue.

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* Courtesy *The Telegraph*, Calcutta

Rambabu Rajak, the honest taxi-driver, dips his meter for another journey to fame

One of the neighbours gave them the address of the house there. When Rajak and Shau reached BK Paul Avenue, Ms. Agarwal's father told them that she had gone to her aunt's place in Moulali.

'The old gentleman asked us to give him the bag, which he said he would give his daughter when she returned home', Rajak explained.

'But I did not. I waited till Sunita Agarwal returned late that night. I wanted to hand over the bag only after I recognized my passenger', Rajak said.

Sunita Agarwal was overwhelmed. She, however, told the taxi-driver that she had reported to the local Burtola police station her having lost her bag.

'She immediately sent her husband, Santosh Agarwal, to withdraw the complaint', Rajak continued. 'But what I liked about her was that she called me *bhaiyya* [brother] and made me eat a lot of sweets', he added.

Next day was Sunita Agarwal's brother's wedding. And it looked as though Rajak was the chief guest.

'Everyone who attended the marriage, came up to me and all looked astonished at a poor man's honesty', Rajak laughed. ❐

To what, then, must we aspire? This, and this alone: the just thought, the unselfish act, the tongue that utters no falsehood; the temper that greets each passing event as something predestined, expected, and emanating from the One source and origin.

—*Marcus Aurelius*

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

TRAINING FOR LIFE

Lalleshwari was a well-known saint of Kashmir. She was married at the age of twelve. Ill-treated by her in-laws, she left her home seeking solace in God, and took for her guru a saint named Sedvayu. As days passed she began to get so immersed in the thought of God and *bhajan* that when she wandered about she was hardly aware of her body: the burden of physical shame and public opinion regarding her attire had left her in peace for good. People mocked her when she passed through the streets singing 'bhajans' in a God-intoxicated state, but she was oblivious of all that.

One day she was singing as she walked on her way to a temple, when a band of children followed teasing her. A cloth merchant observing this scolded the children and chased them away. Noticing his concern, Lalleshwari asked the merchant to give her a piece of cloth and then told him to divide it into two equal pieces. Taking it from him, she placed one piece on each shoulder and continued on her way to the temple. On the road when someone spoke respectfully to her she tied a knot on the strip of cloth on one shoulder, and when someone mocked she stopped and tied a knot on the other piece.

On her way back from the temple, she returned the two pieces of cloth to the merchant and cryptically asked him to weigh them. Mystified though he became, he weighed the pieces and, naturally, found them equal. As he looked up at the saint, wondering what next, Lalleshwari explained the riddle: 'We should not be affected by either praise or slander, because they balance each other. We should look upon them neither with immature exhilaration nor with resentment, but accept them with equipoise.'

News & Reports

CENTRE VEDANTIQUE RAMAKRICHNA
77220 - GRETZ, FRANCE

(English Translation of the December 1995 Letter Addressed to Members)

Dear Member,

Once again a year is coming to a close. Thus the time has come to send you our annual letter, written in order to give you a short report concerning the main events of the past twelve months, and to send to you our best wishes for the New Year.

The work of the Centre went ahead satisfactorily during the past year. A lecture or some other programme was given each Sunday afternoon, regularly by Swami Veetamohananda, Swami Vidyatmananda, Swami Devatmananda, or by an invited speaker such as David Guerdon, Gildas Coudrin, Soeur Marie-Ina Bergeron, Jean-Marc Ohlmann, Elisabeth Fontana, Dr. Hubert Larcher, Swami Yogananda Saraswati, Paul Vervisch, Rachel and Jean-Pierre Cartier, Henry Blanquart, Père Maurice Gardès, Michel Coquet, Dr. Jacques Donnars, Sri Mahesh, Jean-Claude Marol, Dr. Signand Roos, Soeur Suzanne Desrez, Jean-Raoul Sansen, and Revered Père Raymond Rossignol, Pravrajika Bhaktiprana of the Vedanta Society of Southern California visited our Centre in June. There were two dance recitals and two programmes of Indian music. On 24 June, the day of Saint Jean-Baptist, a fire ceremony *(homa)* took place. On Saturday evenings Swami Veetamohananda conducted a class on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, translated into and commented on in French.

The number of friends wishing to make retreats remained steady, so that on important holidays, during the summer, and during most week-ends the ashrama facilities were virtually 'fully booked'.

As usual the morning puja and two meditation periods were observed daily. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Brahmananda were observed. There were special worships for Sri Durga, Mother Kali, and Lord Shiva. Guru Purnima was celebrated. Ram-Nam was sung every ekadashi day (eleventh day after the new or full moon), and Kalpataru Day was marked with a special programme.

The practice of holding seminars was continued—week-end retreats consisting of intensive programs of instruction, meditation, and cultural activities. Seminars for French friends were held 17–19 March, 23–25 June, and 13–15 October, and seminars for German-speaking friends 27–29 January, 19–21 May, and 10–12 November. A number of 'Dutch mothers' came for a week-end of study and music. There was also a 'children's seminar' in October, attended by ten youngsters and their mothers. In June an adult class from the Institute Catholique studied comparative religion with us.

During the year our members made several contributions to the endowment fund established at the Ramakrishna Students' Home in Madras, in memory of Swami Ritajananda. The total capital in this fund, the interest of which is used as grants to help needy students, now stands at more than 38,000 Indian rupees.

In June of 1994 a meeting was held at Gretz, attended by interested persons from Germany, to consider the most appropriate means of establishing a site for a permanent Ramakrishna centre in Germany. During

1995 additional attention was given to this problem, so that by mid-year a property was purchased as the home for the German branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in Germany. It is situated in the village of Bindweide near Coblenz. It is planned that this house will be dedicated in connection with an All-Europe meeting to commemorate Swami Vivekananda's 1896 tour of Europe, on September 6–8 of next year. An announcement of this event will be forwarded to our members as soon as plans are more definite.

During the year Swami Veetamohananda participated as speaker in numerous meetings in France (Lille, Lyon, Nice, and Marseilles) and abroad (Aachen, Frankfort, and Berlin in Germany, at Bourne End in the United Kingdom, at Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid in Spain, and at Durban in South Africa). He visited India from 3 to 20 January. In April Swami Devatmananda conducted a week-end retreat at the Sri Kailash Ashram in Bretagne.

Our magazine *Védanta* came out regularly, 800 copies being printed each trimester, distributed to members as part of their membership and to paid subscribers. A catalogue listing books and other religious materials available through our bookshop was distributed to 2,000 possible clients in October. The French version of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* by Christopher Isherwood—titled *Ramakrishna, une Ame Réalisée*—was published by Editions Rocher on February 23. Albin Michel has contracted with us to publish a re-edition of *Pensée Indienne et Mystique Carmélitaine* by Swami Siddheswarananda.

A firm of professional accountants has been retained to aid us in preparing and presenting the financial reports of the Centre.

Favorable weather conditions during the summer of this year permitted us to harvest a good crop of vegetables and fruits, a large portion of which was canned or frozen for winter. The herd of cows at the moment consists of three milch cows and two heifers. 12,500 litres of milk were sold to the dairy, with 5,000 litres remaining at the ashrama for domestic use. From our ten beehives we harvested 200 kilos of honey. The chicken gave some 10,000 eggs during the year.

Normal maintenance activities plus some special projects were carried out throughout the year. The first phase in completely replacing the electrical installations of the château—which date from 1948—was undertaken. The clothes drier in the laundry was replaced. The furnace of the Brahmananda Bhavan was replaced. The conduit of gas to the château was renewed. The fence separating our 'old orchard' and big field from the private properties next to them was replaced by a two-metre high closure.

The number of members at the present date is about 250. We regret to announce the death of the following members: M. Pierre Mawet in mid-April, Mme. Amanda Guilhem on 17 May, and Mme. Willie Vilenski on 10 July.

The next annual meeting of members is scheduled for Sunday, March 17 at 14 h.00. The annual Sri Ramakrishna festival will take place on Sunday, March 31. Next year our annual observance of Kalpataru Day falls on Monday 1, January, at 14 h.30.

A 24-hour vigil (the continuous chanting of Lord's name in the chapel) will commence at 21 h.00 on Saturday, December 30, and continue until the same hour on Sunday, 31 December. Those who wish to participate may give their name and indicate the hour during which they wish to chant. New Year's Eve will be marked by an outdoor homa-fire from 21 h. 30 to 23 h.30, followed by a period of meditation in the chapel until midnight.

The Swamis and members of the Board of Trustees wish to thank all members and friends of the Centre who co-operated so well during the year in offering various kinds of help. Swami Veetamohananda sends you his best wishes and benedictions for the Holiday Season and throughout the year.

Patrick Remy
Secretary

Reviews and Notices

MIND ACCORDING TO VEDANTA: By Swami Satprakashananda; compiled and edited by Ray Ellis; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 600 004; 1994; pp. 181; Rs. 15/-.

This publication is a collection of lectures with instructions on a difficult subject—the human mind—and aims at explaining it in the light of Vedanta. It is a very useful addition to the already growing literature on the human mind whose dimensions are unlimited. The author, it is noteworthy, is one who having stayed in the USA for 41 years established there a Vedanta Society and worked till the end of his life for the spread of the message of Vedanta.

The book is special in the sense that it studies the mind in the light of Vedantic philosophy, as also with reference to modern psychology. The author has, with his vast and valuable experience in the field, succeeded in explaining in clear terms the nature and the workings of the human mind, and this he has done in a language which can be easily understood by both scholars and laymen. Running to ten chapters, each appearing to be more interesting than the one before, the book starts with what Vedanta has to say about the mind and ends with a very practical subject, namely, psychiatry.

Health and fitness of the body depends greatly on the perfect health of the mind and therefore both of them—body and mind—have to be kept in excellent condition with wholesome food, noble thoughts and regular exercise. We very often tend to concentrate on the body and ignore the mind. This leads to poor and disappointing results which have an evil effect on the total personality. We often forget that the two are complementary.

The author's arguments add up to his insistence that we focus our attention on the mind also and give it spiritual nourishment in order to have a wholesome personality. Mere physical growth without mental culture is like the wild growth in a garden, which does more harm than good.

A vast and complicated subject has been compressed with expert skill into a small book of 181 pages. The book may well be carried around as a constant companion and be of benefit to all those who are struggling to understand themselves and live in harmony with the world outside.

In its final analysis, the book drives home the well-known Vedantic axiom—mind alone is the cause of our bondage as also of our liberation. Just as a mind not under control enslaves and weakens us, so does a mind under control strengthen and liberate us. But to have a real control over the mind we have to understand its workings. *'Mind According to Vedanta'* will surely help its reader in that.

Swami Muktidananda, Mysore

MISSIONARIES IN INDIA, CONTINUITIES, CHANGES, DILEMMAS: By Arun Shourie; publ. A.S.A. Publications, A-31, West End, New Delhi 110 021; 1994; pp. 305; Rs. 250/-.

Arun Shourie's *Missionaries in India* is yet another erudite contribution from the pen of this gifted writer-cum-journalist-cum-columnist. At a time when India is beset with problems regarding secularism, Arun Shourie's book makes an impassioned plea for objectivity in assessing religious dilemmas. *Missionaries in India* was written by Shourie at the behest of the organizers of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India held in January 1994, the highest body engaged in 'attempts to coordinate the work of different Catholic Churches in India and to engage in dialogue with other religions' (p. ix). By asking Shourie to give a Hindu perspective

of the work of Christian missionaries in India, the Catholics were truly catholic in their approach to a highly controversial subject.

Shourie's book is divided into three major sections entitled 'Premises and Consequences', 'The Division of Labour', and 'Changes and Dilemmas'. It ends with an Annexure consisting of 'Assessments by the Church'.

The chief allegation against the missionaries in India is that their sole aim had always been proselytization using, more than often, unscrupulous means to do so. But 'forced' conversion robs Christianity of its basic tenet—that of true service to man. Shourie's book meticulously delineates the objectives of missionary work in India right from the early days of the British rule, to the twentieth century. Pages 58–60 devastatingly lists the 'causes' that drove the British administrators and the missionaries to fulfil their self-imposed task of 'spiritually purifying' a whole nation. India, to them, was 'a den of ignorance, inequity and falsehood', and the principal cause of this state of affairs was Hinduism (p. 58).

Macauley's famous *Minute* of 1835 was a contemptuous denunciation and dismissal of India's religions, languages, and literatures. Shourie is agonizingly incisive in his assessment (supported by historical evidence) of the irreparable damage that the Christian missionaries did to the rich culture of an ancient civilization by zealously pursuing a misguided policy of religious fervour based on bigotry, prejudice and fanaticism. The calculated and systematic distortion and destruction of a religion and a culture negated any positive contributions that these missionaries might have made to the material welfare of Indian society as a whole.

Shourie concludes with the statement that 'the things I had been saying were hardly the things that the Archbishop, the Bishops and the scholars assembled there agreed with....' But they heard him with unbroken patience, courtesy and decorum, thus inspiring the author to comment that 'if only we could learn at least this one thing from them: if only we could learn how to disagree. How much better off our country would be' (p. 242).

Most of the dilemmas of the Christian missionaries in India remain unresolved. But a positive change can take place if the Church is willing to shift its stance 'from calumny to expressions of empathy, from the claim of being the sole possessors of Truth to an ecumenism, from uniformity to "contextualization"' (p. 228). Shourie insists on religious tolerance, and a spiritual understanding that can come only with a true broadening of the human spirit.

The book contains an excellent review of the activities of the Church in India over the last hundred and fifty years. Shourie's review is supported by indisputable historical evidence. The lucidity and clarity of the ideas and the language used in this book make it eminently readable. The comprehensive index is a useful asset to any discerning reader.

This book will be an eye-opener to those who delude themselves with the myth that Westernization is synonymous with 'progress'.

Dr. Rama Nair, Secunderabad

THE VEDANTA KESARI, ANNUAL DECEMBER SPECIAL ISSUE 1994 SPOTLIGHT: Practical Religion: Ed. Swami Tyagananda; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; pp. 102.

When one looks at the Contents of this annual number of the *Vedanta Kesari*, one cannot help but be fascinated by the titles of the articles—'Return to God for Peace', 'Religion Alone Can Bring Us Peace', 'Religion Helps Me to Understand Myself', 'I Love to Pray', 'Religion Saves My Sanity', 'Religion Gives Solace and Peace', 'Religion Gives Direction to My Life', and others. One wonders, can religion bring such fundamental changes in an individual's life and impart such positive results? Then, surely it refutes its projection as a theoretical, impractical thing. On the contrary, it *is* practical, and if practised in day-to-day life can bring such

marvellous results!

This is precisely the idea behind the publication of this beautiful issue: to find out how religion finds expression in the day-to-day life of individuals and what benefits it brings them (p. 408). To achieve the objective, experiences of people from different walks of life, from different parts of the world and from diverse age groups are pooled. This includes representation from children (6 to 11 years age-group), students, teachers, free-lance writers and artists, literary critics, journalists, doctors, engineers, research scholars, housewives, priests and senior monks of diverse religious faiths. The age of these religious practitioners ranges from 6 to 93 years, and they tell us of their understanding of the term 'religion', how they practise religion in their daily lives, and what benefits it has brought them. All the essays make interesting, elevating and refreshing reading.

Religion to some of the contributors is a search for one's true existence, a search for knowledge and awareness of the inward centre. To some, God is a great Power behind everything in the world; to others, a larger reality which is beyond time; to an artist God works through inspiration; to a professional, religion is the putting into practice of ennobling ideals present in scriptures and lives of saints and sages. Religion is devotion and service to God with faith, submission, belief and love in the eyes of a retired person; whereas it is synonymous with spirituality according to an intellectual. The kids love to pray, hear their inner voice and believe in religion.

The fact that the practice of religion provides guidelines to everyone to lead a life of harmony and enlightenment in every sphere of life stands out very clearly from the pages of this journal. Peace, happiness, bliss, confidence, inner solace, unselfishness, strength, balance of mind, beneficial human relationships, improved concentration, increased work efficiency, ability to cope up with unfavourable and undesirable circumstances, and gaining a sense of fulfilment—these are among the innumerable benefits that accrue from the practice of religion.

If religion is so beneficial, then why are most people scared of it? This is beautifully discussed in the Editorial, which captures the dilemmas and complexities faced by ordinary people in the domain of religion. Only if our understanding is distorted and our practice half-hearted does religion become impractical (p. 402).

The editor has been successful in collecting beautiful and thought-provoking articles from a wide cross-section of people. The volume also has illuminating articles by Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji, Revered Swami Chidanandaji (of Divine Life Society) and by learned monks and nuns of the Ramakrishna and Sarada Orders. The editor deserves our unreserved gratitude for having done an excellent job.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Gujarat

VEDIC THOUGHT AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY: by Dr. Shivaram Karikal; publ. Arathi Publications, Anugraha, Hat Hill, Mangalore, Karnataka, 575 006, India; 1994; pp. 288; Rs. 150/-, U.S. $ 30.

The book under review is an attempt made by Dr. Shivaram Karikal to show the superiority of Hindu thought over Western psychology.

What prompted the author, a practising psychiatrist, to undertake such a comparative study was his deep disillusionment with modern psychiatry, which is based on Western psychology, culture, philosophy and neuro-sciences. According to him, Western psychology has failed miserably to answer fundamental questions such as the nature of mind and consciousness.

The book consists of eight chapters. In the first two chapters, the five main approaches of Western Psychology—Neurobiological, Behavioural, Psychoanalytical, Cognitive and Humanistic—are discussed.

The first three schools have taken a lot of stick from the author. Though the author admits that the cognitive schools are more promising than the first three schools, he

argues that even they have limitations since they lay emphasis on mental processes which are considered final. But the mental processes have no independent reality, being evanescent modifications of awareness. In this connection the author asks how one can cognize an object without a subject that never changes, and who the cognizer is in the process of cognition.

According to the author, though humanistic schools are positive in their approach, they are unable to answer whether consciousness is a primary reality in nature or a mere derivative of biological interactions.

In the second chapter 'Western Psychology in Crisis', the author expresses his disapproval of the model of a human projected by the Schools of Western Psychology as a fallen and miserable creature defeated by the unconscious forces within and the social forces outside. The author laments that the idea of self-responsibility is missing in Western Psychology, and, that there has been a progressive shifting of self-responsibility from human being to external forces and, as a result, we are not held responsible for any of our actions. Taking away responsibility from the self leads to escapism. While discussing stress, the author remarks that Western Psychology and culture have emphasized the problem-solving approach to stress, and have neglected the idea of attitudinal transformation in a person to cope with the challenges of life.

In the third chapter, epistemological issues have been dealt with. The author says that objective methodology cannot be applied to the study of consciousness. Reducing the person to various aspects of his functioning does not help us to understand him as a whole and therefore reductionism is not applicable to the realm of consciousness. Both psychology and physiology need to be liberated from the rigid frames of linear causality and epiphenomenalism.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the discussion of states of consciousness, karma, reincarnation etc.

In the chapter 'Echo from Physics', the assumptions of classical and modern physics are summarised and efforts have been made to show that modern physics considers the entire existence as a whole, as an unbroken sea of energy in constant activity.

In the next chapter discussing terms like 'ego', 'Id', 'Super ego', 'libidinal ego', 'collective unconscious', etc., the author says that these terms can cause a lot of confusion regarding the true nature of consciousness.

The last chapter is devoted to a lucid exposition of the practical steps in Yoga and their effects on consciousness.

All told, the author has blazed a new trail in interpreting Indian thought and also in evaluating Western Psychology. Nobody can deny the author's intellectual brilliance and mastery over the difficult subject discussed in the book. The addition of quite a number of diagrams have added to the conceptual clarity of his presentation.

However, it should be pointed out that the presence of too many ideas has robbed the book of sequential coherence and unity. Though Dr. Karikal's overall evaluation of Western Psychology provides a much-needed corrective, the reviewer feels that the author is unduly harsh in his treatment of Western Psychology and its proponents. Like many other systems of Indian thought, Patanjali's Yoga too is concerned chiefly with consciousness and cognitive processes, and has not given equal importance to emotions which play such a dominant role in everybody's life. The psycho-analytic school of Western Psychology on the contrary is concerned chiefly with emotions. It cannot be denied that Western Psychology has accumulated a vast amount of information on the structure and dynamics of human personality, i.e. the empirical self or ego. It is a fact that Indian Psychology has to learn much from modern Western psychologists in the field of conflicts, defense mechanism, ego psychology, social psychology, and concepts of instincts, complexes, archetypes etc. In other words, Yoga and Western Psychology supplement and complement each other.

In sum, this book makes for interesting and illuminating reading. The printing and get up of the book are praiseworthy.

Br. Mananachaitanya, Belur Math

THE TAITTIRĪYA-UPANIṢAD: Translation with exhaustive commentary, By Swami Muni Narayana Prasad; publ. D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., "Sri Kunj", F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi, 110 015; 1994; pp. 211; Rs. 125/-.

The Upaniṣads are the major sources of the Vedanta philosophy. They are the most speculative portions of the Vedas. About their number and dates no definite conclusion has been reached. But those commented on by Āchārya Śaṅkara are treated as the major ones, and the *Taittirīya* belongs to this category. According to one view, the internal evidences and literary references show that they (at least the major ones) belong to an era between 1500 and 200 BC. Their magnificent vision raises human consciousness to sublime heights and has influenced people belonging to East and West. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), a brilliant philosopher, has forcefully declared that the Upaniṣads are the solace of his life as well of his death.

The Taittirīya-Upaniṣad is a part of the *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda (Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka,* chs. vii-ix) and contains three sections, namely, *Śikṣā, Brahmānanda* and *Bhṛgu vallī*s. The first section deals with preparatory endeavours to reach the highest end. It includes the famous instructions of the teacher to the disciples—'*Satyaṁ vada dharmaṁ cara*, Speak out the Truth, practise righteousness', etc. and enjoins to follow, in case of doubts about deeds or persons, the *brāhmin*s who are unitively balanced and self-guided *(yuktā āyuktāḥ)*.

Section two explains the placement of man within the total system. This section also deals with a secondary *(anu-praśna)* but vital question whether the ignorant also attains Brahman after his death, as it has been said in the beginning of the section that the knower attains the supreme *(Brahmavid-āpnoti param)*. The question has not been directly answered. A new picture of the creation story is presented instead to drive home that the duality of the enlightened and the unenlightened or the like appears to be real here only because of the one primeval Reality.

The third section also shows this fact by stating that in Brahman alone is centred the source of everything. He is the Creator, Sustainer and the Annihilator of the universe. This section contains the well-known *kośa* theory [Reality having five sheaths, namely, matter (*anna*), life (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), wisdom (*vijñāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*)] conceived by Advaita Vedanta as veiling the Self. According to this commentator the *Taittirīya* does not subscribe to such an idea. It clearly identifies the matter with the Self (the enjoyer) when it says: *'ahamannam, aham annādah*, I am food, I am the food-eater'.

The commentator, Swami Muni Narayana Prasad (b. 1938), a disciple of Naṭarāja Guru and presently the Regulating Secretary of the Narayana Gurukula, has commented on some of the other major upaniṣads as well. His commentary, with Sanskrit text, Roman transliteration and English paraphrasing, is stimulating and reveals the invisible thread that goes through the text of the *Taittirīya*. The volume in hand is number 1 in the series 'Rediscovering Indian Literary Classics'. It includes a glossary, bibliography and an index. The publication is an important addition to the classical studies of Indian origins.

Dr. S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur

Books Received

IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND MAN: The Ramakrishna Mission in Mauritius: By Dr. L.P. Ramyeed, ed. Swami Kirtidananda & Dr. Kevin Shillington; publ. Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius; pp. 281; paperback; price not given.

TRIBUTES TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS—1893–1993: Souvenir of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna, Bihar, 800 004; Publ. The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna; 1995; pp. 111; Rs. 15/-; by post Rs. 3 extra.

SĀNKHYA-KĀRIKĀ of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa: tr. Swami Virupakshananda; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 600 004; 1995; pp. 135 + vii; paperback Rs. 20/-.

HANUMAN VIGRAH: By Shailendra Misra; publ. Sterling Publishers, P. Ltd., L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110 016; 1995; pp. 128; paperback Rs. 75/-.

GOD WHO WALKED ON EARTH: The Life and Times of Shirdi Sai Baba: By Rangaswami Parthasarathy; publ. Sterling Publishers, P. Ltd., L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110 016; 1996; pp. 230 + viii; paperback Rs. 95/-.

CHINNAMASTĀ: By Elisabeth Anne Benard; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41-U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi, 110 007; 1994; pp. 162 + xiv; hardcover Rs. 145/-.

MIND & SUPERMIND, vol. I, II: By Dr. N.C. Panda; publ. D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 'Sri Kunj', F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi 110 015; 1996; pp. 337 and 400 respectively; hardcover, Rs. 1000/-, US $83.30, per set.

On Charity

(Continued from page 316)

material things to a deserving person, where *śraddhā* certainly implies a firm faith in God and spiritual aspiration. Again, the scriptures, to prevent any worldly calculation from polluting the purity of dana, say: विद्यते सागरस्यान्तो दानस्यान्तो न विद्यते, *vidyate sāgarasyānto dānasyānto na vidyate*: an ocean has boundaries, but dana has no limits.

And to emphasize the crucial importance of humility in rendering dana spiritually potent the *Śuddhi-tattva* says: गत्वा यद्दीयते दानं तदनन्तफलं स्मृतम्, *gatvā yaddīyate dānam tadananta-phalam smṛtam*: that dana which is performed by ***going*** to the needy is incalculably beneficial. To this the *Vahni-purāṇa* adds a qualifying word, *bhaktyā* (with bhakti). That is, a giver must be self-effacing enough to go to the needy person and give with bhakti—with the thought of God in one's mind and with the idea that the receiver is God in disguise.

Another point we should remember in the hurly-burly of these days is that, vicarious dana through charitable institutions etc. is another matter altogether. What is being emphasized here is dana by oneself, with love for God and humility, and entailing genuine self-denial. Changes in social ethos do not matter, one's station in life does not matter. Human beings must practise dana. It is bound to give us immediately perceivable results—joy, satisfaction, peace and an unmistakable spiritual stirring deep within. ❐

CORRECTIONS

ON THE PAGE OF CONTENTS OF *PB* APRIL 1996

1.	... Shomas Faqir	*should be*	Shamas Faqir
2.	Ms. Aparna **Sen**	*should be*	Ms. Aparna **Dar**